MARIA;

OR,

THE HOLLANDERS:

BY

LOUIS BUONAPARTE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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MARIA

OR,

THE HOLLANDERS

LETTER LXI.

From Julius to Adolphus.

NOBODY answers me; all is dumb around me. Years roll away, seasons are renewed, my sufferings change without diminishing, and I cannot escape from my situation. What do I say? I have escaped at length; but what a frightful alteration! Your friend is no more the same. I seek, with too much reason, to hide my sorrows, and the grief which devours my heart. Changed, aged without years, the wounds which

scar my body are not the greatest of the ills which I have suffered from the commerce of my fellow-creatures!

Retired near a remote little village, alone, and the prey of a thousand painful recollections, I inquire not where they are, nor whether they exist. I make use of the first moment of my liberty to procure a safe conveyance for this letter. Hear me, and leave me to draw nearer to you of myself, if that be possible. I have need of a long gradation to accomplish it.

After having sent you the note, which one of our flags undertook to deliver,* I was conducted, with a hundred other prisoners, from Mount Cenis toward Milan. My wounds caused me the severest sufferings; I could scarcely sustain the journey; but I must not deny the courtesy of the enemy's officer in command, who offered me permission to

* Letter XXVII.

make a stay. He had refused, though politely, to forward the shortest letter, and his general also refused to exchange me against an officer of the same rank, and permit me to return on parole.

Resigned to my fate, I suffered in silence. The portrait of Maria, and the hair of her and my sister, the cuirass which she had sent me, and Hermacintha's time-keeper, were precious talismans which seemed to support me still; and though my cuirass was pierced near the arm, I felt a lively joy at seeing that it had repelled two balls on the left side of the breast. The care which Maria had taken to render this side more impenetrable than the other, had saved me.

We passed through a little town in Piedmont, called *Verceil.* This name seemed familiar to me. I was looking round me mechanically, when, at a window, I perceived Sophia and her mother. The first uttered a cry and disappeared, and immediately I saw her come to the

door of the house and ask for me. She and her mother obtained permission that I should stay some time with them. Their joy and their attention to me was extreme. I shall not dwell on the particulars of my residence. I could not hide from myself that Sophia's sentiments had lost none of their strength. My arrival, and the assurance she received from me that I was not married, dissipated the dejection and languor which had spread itself over all her countenance. Her cheerfulness, her amiable tenderness toward her parents, and her attentions to me, made a place of enchantment of this abode. This will not astonish you, when you hear that all our conversation regarded Maria, my sister, and you, and the hope and means of my rejoining you.—

One day I surprized Sophia with a little regimental scarf which had belonged to me. She informed me that I had forgotten it at their house at Chambéri, when they lived there, and I had

the happiness of restoring her to her parents; and that she had possessed herself of it, to keep a remembrancer of her defender and friend. I thanked her with warmth. She took my arm, and we walked in the park till it was somewhat late. Suddenly I felt Sophia tremble, after her hand, of the arm which leaned upon mine, had felt beneath my waistcoat the portrait of my beloved. "She is happy!" said she. This exclamation, so misplaced, while I was torn with fears and sorrows, made me shed tears. I told her of our misfortunes, our unalterable fidelity, and tried passion for each other; adding an eulogium on her who was always present to my mind. "We must conclude," said she; "if I did not call to your recollection that it is time to go in, we should spend the night in talking of Maria: she must be perfection." She asked me a thousand questions, to which I answered according to truth, and I perceived that my profound

attachment to Maria afflicted her. She remained silent for some time; she appeared plunged in the completest reverie, and then, suddenly, said, "I will tell you also something concerning myself. I am going to be married."—She seemed to speak these words with composure.—"You marry! But since I have been here, I have heard you declare against marriage with vehemence."—"That is very true; but it is over. I must yield to my parents, and to the attachment of a worthy man, who will be lost for ever without his Maria. I shall be a Maria to him. I am not a slave to self-love, nor am I insensible." She uttered these words with an air of cheerfulness, and almost of irony, of which I was the dupe.

To my great astonishment, the next day, I saw all the family in spirits, and the lover at the height of joy. The preparations for the marriage advanced, but Sophia's health appeared to decline, with-

out any one's seeing it but me. To the terrible sorrows of my own situation, I joined the fear of causing misunderstanding and misfortune in the hospitable house where I had found some repose. I wished to leave it, and join the rest of the prisoners; but all my intreaties were in vain, and the family insisted on my remaining with them till after Sophia's marriage.

One evening I was at my window, which looked into a garden, laid out after Lenôtre, but without chasings and elm-hedges, and terminated by a wood of exquisite beauty, in the bosom of which appeared the sheets of a rivulet which discharged itself, by a cascade, into a river in the garden, surrounded by an alley of orange-trees, placed as if to receive the coolest and pleasantest water in the world. I heard from my window the regular noise of the waterfall. The evening was dark. I went down into the garden, and passed several hours in

thinking on all the beloved objects of my affections. I was at the Hermitage, or at Paris, or on the field of battle, where we were separated.—In the midst of my musings a white shadow glided round the trees. I looked what it could be, and Sophia discovered herself. I expressed my surprize. "It is my custom," replied she. "My parents allow it. The mild and cool air of our beautiful nights is the more necessary to my health, because the heat of the sun greatly incommodes me. I support it by passing the hottest hours in bed, and keeping up a good part of the night.

We had a long conversation. "Do you believe in real friendship between two young people of different sexes?" said she.—"Yes, madam, for I believe in love."—"What, there is no sentiment, then, more pure, more genuine, and entirely independent on love?"—"I believe not."—"So much the worse," said Sophia; "I want to separate them."—"It

seems to me," said I, "that we love coolly, if we love not solely."—"No doubt," said she; "but is it quite necessary to love a husband with a love of the heart?"—"You go back to your first question," said I: "if the friendship is a sincere one, between two persons of different sexes, and between whom are reciprocal sentiments, that friendship is love. If, on the contrary, you entertain for your husband what is vulgarly called friendship, that which is often less than nothing, ah! so far from that sufficing, the husbands who are content with it, are guilty husbands, in my judgment."

She asked me afterward, whether I was perfectly resolved never to marry any other than Maria. "O yes!" replied I, "she alone for me, and I alone for her."—"Swear to nothing," said Sophia; "for, if she should marry another?——" "Impossible! dear Sophia; and if it could happen, I should die; and every thing tells me that I could easily

do that."—"You say rightly. When we have found a husband worthy of us, and cannot obtain his heart, we must die;—that is the only remedy." She then changed the conversation. We made several turnings in the alleys, talking of indifferent things; after which she left me, and I also returned into the house.

The next day she wore a frank and genuine cheerfulness. She seemed released from a great weight. Her attentions and marks of tenderness toward her parents were perhaps excessive. I could make nothing of this novelty; but her invincible coldness toward her future husband, which his assiduities only made more apparent, explained her situation, at least I thought so. She has fixed upon her part, said I to myself; open and virtuous, she will not disguise her feelings from her husband: she shows him even more coldness than she feels, and hence she seeks to procure pardon, by her

caresses of her parents, for her estrangement from the man of their choice.

After dinner, as we were taking our lemonade, "Do you take your walk this evening?" said she, addressing herself to me; "I should much like to meet you there again, if it is not putting a restraint upon you: as for me, you are no restraint whatever."—"My child," said her mother," you are making an assignation with thegentleman."—"Mama, you have taught me to grant no meetings but proper ones; and I thought of nothing otherwise in giving this invitation to the gentleman, nor he either, I answer. Permit me to walk and converse with him as often as he will; the past has proved that he is a brother to me," added she, with a sigh.

I did not fail to keep the appointment. I acknowledge, nevertheless, that it was some embarrassment to me to be so often with the rival of Maria; but I resolved never to refuse her. The epoch

of her marriage approached, and, like her parents, I thought, in lending myself to her innocent fancies, to hasten its coming, and thus put an end to all the uneasiness of this good family.—“ It is only to you, Mademoiselle,” said I, as we approached the cascade, “ that it is permitted, not to forget the rules of etiquette, but to change them.”—“ Speak out, sir,” said she, “ the rules of decency ; that word will do better than the one you have made use of; it is what you would have said: but decency, which I love earnestly, which I highly esteem, and which I practice, I despise in its subtleties. What paltry minds, and what frail hearts, are those, which have need of all those chains, of those infinitely little chains, to remain in their proper place and character. I am less fearful, and my parents likewise: and I hold in sovereign contempt, the creature who has so little understanding as not to be able to retain over itself the

petty empire of circumstance and presence of mind. I am not such a child now, as when we passed the night together on the heath. If the same thing were to happen now, I should be less afraid of my own weakness, as well as of the nocturnal animals. We ought to be firm; but it is not the oak, however strong it may be, that the tempests leave unshaken. The thing essential is, not to be uprooted.*

We passed all the night in conversation the most amiable and innocent. She began several subjects, but soon recollecting herself, talked to me only of Maria and Hermacintha, and the means of removing the obstacles which political events and war created against both our union and correspondence; and if, some-

* If the reader should take any offence at this passage, let him think what must have been the sufferings of good Hermacintha, on her perusal of it.—Tr.

times, I perceived an alteration in her voice, and an increased animation in her utterance, never did I see her forget, for an instant, those bonds of propriety which she seemed to disdain, and much less any of her resolutions.

At length, the day of her marriage arrived. She passed in prayer the whole day preceding, and at night she asked her parents to come with me to the cascade. The stars shone with the greatest magnificence, but there was no other light. She wished for her parents' blessing, spoke to them of her repentance for her faults, humbly asked their pardon, and mine also; and, upon our expressing our astonishment, "It is Father di Lamblardia's order," said she. "My confessor directs me to ask pardon in the face of heaven; and I believe, with him, that we should commit much fewer bad actions, if we had not such fine houses to cover us. The pure and infinite aspect of this solemn heaven

would terrify the guilty, and strengthen the just and feeble; such it shows itself to us at this moment; it seems to unveil to us the immensity and infinity of the Being of Beings; it enlarges and ennobles our thoughts. Oh! what are the misfortunes and the sorrows of this world, compared with the fragility of our existence? There are but three things which are real afflictions; remorse, crime, and irreligion. All the rest, love itself, unfortunate as it may be, is of so short duration, that its griefs are to be despised, though they are very piercing!" Here she could not restrain her sobs, and a deep sigh. "O my parents! believe that your child has lived, even to this day, worthy of you in her conduct and actions; and that if she has sometimes had the weakness to indulge in evil thoughts, she has expiated them, and expiates them again at this moment.—Whether I go before you, or follow you on high, I would not do you wrong; I would be there with you. There, at least, we

may love and esteem virtue without fear, without suffering, and without any other consideration than that of virtuous inclinations. And you," said she, to me; "you, whom I call, and I am sure shall call, to my last hour, by the sweet and sacred name of brother, you, whom I love to see with me, and with my parents, at this solemn moment of my life, forgive me all the guilty sentiments which I may have betrayed to you. I loved only your virtues, the happy unison of our minds, our principles, and of our opinions. Maria loves you, and she will not be unfaithful to you. You have not attempted to create elsewhere the sentiments which you have so dearly vowed to her. You are more happy, more exempt from reproach, and you will be more happy than I. O my God! I confide in thee. Have mercy upon me! I was born yesterday; I am fleeting away. Presently, nothing will remain of me but a feeble recollection of my passage upon earth, and my mind

alone will return to its Creator, on leaving its corruptible prison, with the images of those who are dear to me!"—"Why this extreme enthusiasm," said her parents? "My confessor has assured me, that on the eve of marriage, we should prepare ourselves as if we were going the great and eternal journey. I obey him; for I deeply feel that it is the most important day of my life."—"*And your husband?*"—"I owe him nothing yet; to-morrow, let it be so."

She embraced her parents, but hesitated when she came to me. Then, "It is my brother," said she; and as soon as I had pressed her in my arms, "I am ill," cried she, with a piercing shriek, placing her hand on her heart. "O mother, I am ill!" and fell into her arms. She was led to her chamber. Her parents attributed her state to the extreme and scrupulous delicacy of her conscience, which her director had further increased; to the majesty of the night, and to the

approaching important event of her life. I gave my arm to her mother, who had need of the refreshment of the air. Each of us gathered a bouquet of the flowers she loved best, and mine was exclusively of roses. Afterward, we passed the greater part of the night around Sophia's bed. At last, her mother wished to be left alone with her. Nearly calm and falling asleep, she said nothing, and scarcely seemed to breathe. I left her, and the next day was the most dismal of my life! She was found dead in her bed, with her lips pressed upon the roses which I had presented.

I went to see her. Her figure displayed a striking serenity, and she seemed asleep. Her joined hands pressed the two bouquets which her mother and I had given her in the evening; the one lay upon her heart, the other, larger, reached to her lips; her head inclining a little toward it. Great God! what a cruel moment! I thought of Maria in

such a state! Vanity, folly, illusions of the affairs of this world!—A little while before, she was shining in youth, beauty, and bloom; and already she was but an insensible corpse, cold and repulsive! Yet she still wore the same clothing, and the same appearance; it was her still!

My emotion was so strong at this sad sight, that I was carried insensible to my chamber. I fell ill again, and all my wounds re-opened.

Sophia's family were overwhelmed by their misfortune, and with difficulty suspected its cause.—The physicians were of opinion that she died of an attack of apoplexy.

As soon as I was cured, this family set out for Vienna, where I followed them. In that city I could not obtain permission to reside. I was obliged to join a great number of officers, prisoners like myself, in Austrian Poland. On the journey, many were attacked by the

almost pestilential fever, called *of Hungary*. Several perished in the most melancholy manner; and I was attacked among the rest. In no condition to be carried further, I should infallibly have become a victim, but for the Baroness d'S——, who lived on an estate of that name, at a little distance from the town in which I was. On hearing of my sufferings, she caused me to be brought to her house, and lavished on me all imaginable assistance. I accepted it with gratitude, and I owed my convalescence to her cares. Scarcely had it begun, when I perceived, with horror, that the two presents of Hermacintha and Maria were no longer in my possession, but had been lost, in the course of my repeated changes of abode. This was the commencement of a new career of faults and sorrows. It seemed to me, that these talismans of love and virtue having forsaken me, I could not but go wrong.

The Baroness d'Es—— was a co-

quet. Obliged, by political occurrences, to change her name, she had not changed her character or manners. Into the midst of Poland she had transported the luxuries and frivolities of the Sybarites. I lived six months in her house, without being able, by any effort possible, to obtain the least news of you, Holland, or Maria. Weary at length of hoping, I resigned myself to waiting. Peace, which was continually talked of, did not come; all the armistices, all the truces, were of short duration. I continued to live with the Baroness d' Es—— in a sort of familiarity which was not long before it ceased to be as innocent as it had been at beginning. In the presence of Sophia, my affections had been moved; my danger kept me awake, and on my guard; but, in the presence of the Baroness, I indulged in an overweening confidence. Sometimes looking into myself, it seemed to me that Maria, and especially the awful Hermacintha, had

reproaches to make me, and might blame my confidence and negligence; but, proud of my long constancy, proud of having resisted the amiable Sophia, I thought myself inaccessible!—The Baroness was beautiful, young, and extremely well-informed; her conversation was filled with charms and graces, and so much the more dangerous for me, as she shared entirely my sentiments and opinions.

"If you are rational, and worthy of the esteem I bear you," said she, "you will despise these vain amusements, these frivolous ornaments, that luxury which, doubtlessly, strikes you in my house; but, not being able to find the man made to enchain me, and fill up the whole desire of my heart, in want of happiness, I have gathered round me all the auxiliarios possible. It is good for me to multiply them; they enable me to soothe my repinings, and to lay asleep my desires, though never to put an end

to one or the other. O Julius! happy she, who finds in a cottage true friendship, a middling competence, or still less than this! That is happiness. How willingly would I change conditions with her who lives thus! How willingly would I resign all these brilliant nothings, these costly jewels, which divert my moments much less than they torment them, for a thatched cottage, with innocence and friendship for its inmates!"

Discourses like these were but too conformable to my sentiments not to find a way to my heart. They interested me in Madame d'Es——. I thought that she who possessed, in their highest degree, fortune and honours, and enjoyed every kind of prosperity at once, could scarcely have preserved herself thus pure without the severest struggles. From this moment, all her outrageous luxury, her jewels, her grand entertainments, and profuse expenses, not only

appeared justified in my eyes, but so many motives to increase my esteem and admiration. When, in the midst of these dissipations, of the most brilliant fêtes, I surprized her fixing on me one of her inquiring looks, she has not, I said to myself, all the happiness which she seems to have; the grandeur of this luxury and these fêtes supplies me with the measure of her secret disquietudes. How I pity her! Her laughter, nonsense, and coquetries disguise her sufferings. Insensibly, I grew still more familiar with her. We made parties into the country, assisted at rural fêtes and labours; and this familiarity, far from strengthening my mind, overthrew it.

Reason, however, regained its ascendance, and I resolved to leave her. I could not depart from the place without the consent of the officers of government. I made so many efforts, that at length I succeeded in obtaining leave to go to the distance of a few leagues, and I fixed

my residence accordingly in a neighbouring little town. There I lived in tranquillity a short time; and began, through my resolution, to repair my error; when an order of government recalled all the prisoners of war, to the place of their original residence.

I asked for no news of the Baroness during this short absence. On my return, I tried whether I could not be forgotten, though living in the same city, and accordingly did not pay her my visit. I hired a small garden in a pleasant situation, not far from the gates, in which I had a commodious lodging. To this I confined my walks, and avoided all my acquaintance, with the exception of the aged Countess de Hall, whose residence was close to mine. I was fond of the conversation of this lady, a woman distinguished for her endowments and manners.

One day, when I was at her house, one of her young female friends came in,

and talked much of different ladies of the city; pronouncing at length the name of the Baroness, whom she painted unhappy, melancholy, sick, and almost dying, in consequence of the estrangement and ingratitude of her young prisoner. I was desirous of speaking in my own defence; but, whether this lady had herself occasion to complain, or whether it was her habit, she broke out against men in a manner which precluded reply, for she spoke without interval, and very eloquently. She departed at the end of her long harangue, refusing to hear any answer, and left me equally astonished at her abilities and her conduct. I learned that she had an estate not far from the city, which last she often visited; and where she enjoyed great respect. She was accused of but two faults; that of an excessive rigour in her own conduct and principles, and an excessive indulgence for others.

Sometime after, I met again, when

she took me to her house, and presented me to her husband, who received me with a noble politeness, and the most amiable ease and affability.

Sometimes, also, a small number of persons visited me. Literature and conversation were our favourite amusements.

One evening, I was forewarned that our society would be enlarged by the presence of persons whom it was wished to surprise; and, a little time after, arrived two ladies in long veils. I was not long in recognizing in them the Baroness and her friend. Both uttered a cry of surprise at seing me, but they immediately recovered their self-possession.

Never did I see in Amelia so muc mental superiority, gaiety, and sweetness, as this evening. She skirmished with me in a piquant though indirect manner, and complained of the conduct of men, who, by sudden ruptures, and

capricious conduct, brought suspicious on the reputation of women.

She laughed, however, and showed herself above all the littlenesses of her sex. "The only vengeance I wish to take," said she, without turning herself toward me, "is to laugh at them; I ought, at least, to be allowed to amuse myself at the expense of the enemies of my sex." I thought the evening very short: I defended myself very indifferently; and, when the company separated, these ladies affected to take leave of me in a style of cold politeness, which I considered misplaced, as did also the spectators, who were all aware of the intimacy which had previously subsisted between us.

The week after, there was a grand fête at the abbey which adjoined my garden; it was the festival of the patron-saint of the church. I was asked for leave to see the procession of the numerous companies of pilgrims who came in crowds

upon that day. The Baroness and her friend were there. I did the honours of my garden to these ladies, and led them all around it. At a moment when I had left the company assembled on a little terrace, engaged in viewing the groupes of pilgrims, and hearing their hymns and prayers, I met the Baroness alone and separate. She hastened her steps when she found herself surprised; but she was obliged to pass by a little English bridge, on which I already was. I made way, bowed to her, and passed her with rapidity.—This astonished Amelia. She stopped, called to me, and ill concealing her vexation, for I had the air of flying from her, "Sir," said she, in a serious tone, "at least give me back my portrait and letters."—"Psha!" replied I, with a levity, which was neither in my character nor in my heart, especially at that moment, "they were burnt long ago!" She betrayed a momentary anger, and rejoined the company. All the evening

she appeared gay, light, and amiable, though I surprised her several times conversing with her friend in a low voice, and with a grave and mysterious air. I know not why I gave her so rude an answer; I saw too late, that it was an uncalled-for outrage; a first movement of which I was not master. I had treated Amelia as a superior enemy, against whom one entertains a just rancour, and whom one is pleased to humiliate, when an opportunity is found of exercising any mode of vengeance; but I had succeeded very badly. I perceived then, as on many occasions, that, in exercising vengeance, a good mind avenges itself too much, and brings itself nearer to the person who has offended, while the latter suffers little * We must be profoundly

* That is, a good mind, having fallen into excessive vengeance, is reduced, by a sense of this excess, and by the desire, unavoidable to a good mind, of making reparation, into a sort of supplicant to

wicked, before we can rejoice in the evil we inflict, for our own interest sake, and for the sole purpose of evil.

As for Amelia, she acted more nobly on her side. She retained no remembrance of my offensive reply. At this time, her health appeared to suffer. When I met her in society, and asked her how she did, she encouraged me with a smile; and afterward I saw her turn aside, and secretly wipe away the tears which were ready to flow. I confess, Adolphus, that this distressed me. Often have I quitted the room

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the original offender; while the latter, whether through his own indifference, or through the very effect of the excess of vengeance inflicted, which restores the offender to a feeling of superiority, suffers little. In the case before us, Julius wished to maintain a distance between himself and Amelia; but the fault he had committed necessarily drew him nearer to her; because, with his sensibility, it was impossible not to feel, that he had brought upon himself a duty to perform to her—a necessity, therefore, of approaching her—a duty of atonement.—Tr.

really afflicted at having given pain to a woman to whom I owed so many obligations. Injustice and ingratitude are what I have always revolted from; I was indignant at my own conduct; and I found myself, contrary to my design, better disposed toward Amelia, than I had hoped for or believed.

I was in this situation, when, one day, I went at an accustomed hour to Madame de Hall's. I was there to receive, and actually did receive, a reply, but in the negative, to new efforts for my exchange.

My aged friend finding herself alone with me, spoke freely of my situation, and found fault with my melancholy, and the solitude in which I lived, thanking me, at the same time, for the single exception which I made in favour of her house, which, nevertheless, did not deserve it so well as that of the young Baroness d'Es—where I had been so well treated, and where I had left the

most favourable recollections, and a real attachment. She spoke to me then of the situation of Amelia; and conjured me to see her, for her reputation even, and still more for her tranquillity. "Your presence is needful to her; the company we love," said she, "calms us at the same time that it agitates us. It seems to me, as well as I can recollect, that if the heart palpitates at the approach of the beloved object, and every emotion combines at once to agitate it; still, by the sole aid of the presence of that object, we can find the strength necessary against the heart itself." I passed lightly over the fallacy of this thought, in the accuracy of which she herself doubtlessly did not believe, and adopted it without reflection.

She determined me to repair my wrongs toward a woman who was sincerely my friend, to explain myself frankly, to take away every hope as the

rival of Maria, but to promise my friendship, confidence and solicitude, which I could not refuse her without injustice. "You have been with us a long time," said she, "you are losing the best years of your life. God only knows when you will be able to return home; why not enjoy the friendship of those to whom you are become necessary, and of whose sincerity you cannot doubt?"

I made my promise, and I kept it. Some days after, I met Amelia at my neighbour's. She appeared to be still more dejected. I asked permission to return to her house. The Baroness betrayed an expression of surprize, cast down her eyes, and replied, blushing, "You have long since had permission." From this moment she became more animated, more cheerful, and, from time to time, I caught her looks directed on me, and which she withdrew as soon as I perceived them. I returned to her house,

where I always found some aged person or other. She was no longer the same woman. Rationality, gentleness, an extreme propriety, and perfect regularity, were in every thing she did. Moderation seemed to have become the universal rule with Amelia.

She had adopted a change in her elegant attire. I found her constantly dressed in black; and, though her costume was always directed by that extreme elegance which was natural to her, this displeased me. I asked her whether she was in mourning, and, often repeating the same question, she one day answered me, " I have very strong reasons for doing this: and since you are so pressing, and so good as always to take so much concern in me, to-morrow I will give you an explanation of every thing." The night, and the day following, I was in extreme impatience, though I was very sure that I should not relapse into my former sentiments for her.—

You will believe it, Adolphus, since I can assure you, that at this time she appeared much changed. Her size was a little increased, her face of an extreme paleness, and her beautiful arms and neck so covered, that I could not doubt she had lost much of her beauty.

The next day, I went to her at the usual hour, and found her alone. At first, we conversed on indifferent things. I increased my confidence by observing how much her dress and her beauty differed from what they formerly were. I offered to justify my conduct; but " it is unnecessary," said she, " it was justified yesterday."

" Do you wish to know the cause of my mourning? If you are not afraid to go with me into my little library, you shall presently see, and I dare believe that you will approve of it. I did not oppose this, but followed her. The inside of the door was lined with looking-glass; she shut it upon us, and I found

myself in a charming closet, which I thought I knew again, but which had been much embellished. Mirrors, gilding, and the most sumptuous furniture, were distributed around it, with taste and elegant simplicity. The light, contrived with great skill, came through a conservatory, filled with delicious flowers, brought from her vast green-houses. She asked me whether it was possible that I did not observe a great change in her.— "Am I exactly the same? Speak truly." —"I acknowledge," said I, "that it is impossible to say there is no difference; but what is that to you, Amelia, who are so rich in charms, graces, and youth?" "Psha! no contradiction. I am ugly, since you do not think me the same; but we forget our purpose. I, also, wish you to know the cause of my mourning. I see with pleasure that your sentiments are become more calm, more reasonable than formerly, and that they allow me a familiarity essential to save me from en-

tering into a confession and particulars, and especially a certain word which my lips refuse to pronounce. She was standing, and had required that I should be the same. Encircled by mirrors on every side, I saw her cast on me, in pronouncing these words, her archest looks, and at the same time loosen some ribbands, and immediately her robe of mourning fell, and she appeared in the most elegant undress. Her beautiful arms were, perhaps, more beautiful than before; the whiteness of her neck and complexion more animated; and her person, I know not by what charm, had resumed the most dazzling fairness. I could not restrain a cry of surprize.

"What is this enchantment? Amelia, are you a sorceress?"—"No, God forbid!" replied she, "but a woman who is not yet so ugly nor so old as you think. But compose yourself.—What do I see? You are just as you were formerly. If you were as inflammable,

what would become of us?—Julius, do you remark nothing in me?"—I made no reply. I was in extasy, in real extasy! I saw nothing but Amelia; her atmosphere absorbed all my faculties; and, before I knew it, I was in her arms. Thus I fell again, in spite of myself, into my first faults; and, what you will have difficulty to comprehend, Adolphus, scarcely was I recovered from confusion, when I dared to implore the image of Maria, dared to prostrate myself before her, and promise to become again worthy of her! I was too much ashamed of my weakness to remain in this situation. I made new efforts to procure my exchange, or permission to go elsewhere, but all to no purpose.

Adolphus, Adolphus, remember my *Essay on Happiness*, and be astonished at my weakness! But, my friend, I am about to explain my character, and the enigma of my contradictions. I recollect the words of Hermacintha: "I am sure

of Maria: as for you, Julius, you are as well tried as it is possible for you to be under the direction of a young woman; but the want of a father is irreparable, and will always make itself felt in you. You have understanding and knowledge sufficient to enable you to resist temptation, but your impetuous character, and inflammable imagination, will expose you to real dangers. A father alone, by the spectacle of the horror of certain errors, and by his constant direction, could give you that early experience which is so useful, and so difficult to obtain. I am only a woman; I can only beg you, my friend, to be on your guard against yourself.—It is for you to crown the work of your education, and confirm it. There are temptations against which you are, or, at least, I believe you to be shielded; such are those of the mind; of the true passions; I am tranquil as to these. Never will you find another Maria; never will you love another like her; your souls

are too much in unison. But, as to the temptations of the moment, grosser attacks, and to which you are both entirely strangers, I am fearful as to them, unless you keep yourself constantly on your guard, and have the greatest want of confidence in yourself. The other dangers, doubtlessly, appear to you more to be dreaded; but undeceive yourself. It is when we are out of our spheres, out of the circle of our ideas and habits, that we are most easily surprized, and are most weak. Every one is strongest at home. Young people educated with reserve are easily surprized by their senses; this is the sole defect of your education; others fall through the errors of their principles and understanding."* Hermacintha was not deceived; for when I was in the pre-

* The reader will perceive, that the above is an altered copy of the words which have occurred in a previous letter.—Tr.

sence of Amelia, I was no longer my own master; I was entirely absorbed.

From this moment, Amelia became still more amiable, but serious and only friendly. She talked to me of my situation, my studies, and my griefs, with an accent of true friendship. She confined her society to a small number of persons whom I preferred. It might be said, that she dived into my thoughts, so much care did she take to prevent all my wishes, and so much did she succeed.

She pointed out to me the merits of such books as I was unacquainted with, demanded my opinion, procured them, and put them in my way. At this period she experienced an accident at a ball: she sprained her ancle, and was kept for some time at home. Morning and evening I was always necessary to her, because she was in continual pain.

Every evening, when I left her, though at a late hour, her pain increased. "Yes,

I must suffer patiently," said she, "but not in solitude; suffer, but not at a distance from thee!"

One day, she made me promise to do her a favour.—"It was nothing," she said, "which belonged to my duties, or related to my conduct."—I promised, and she asked me to come and live in her house. I resisted, pleading her condition, and my interest in her welfare; but an accident prevented me from holding out long. The garden which I had hired changed proprietors, and the new purchaser gave me notice, that conformably with the custom of the country, my agreement ceased, and that I must look out for another abode. Amelia required me to fulfil my promise. I refused at first, but, finding no other quarters, I was obliged to go to an inn. This threw Amelia into despair; and the Countess de Hall, M. and Madame de *** informed me, that the city ridiculed my puerile fears, and disobliging refusals to-

ward Amelia, who, on her part, pressed me with so much sincerity, that I ended by yielding.

I now lodged in her house, and resumed my ancient apartment. Scarcely was I there before I went to hers. I found her alone, and made use of the moment to intreat her to be my guardian, to protect me against her charms, and save me from myself; showing, at the same time, the portraits of Maria and my sister, and begging her to preserve me for them, and shield me from my own weakness. She promised me this; and the greatest reserve, and a tone the most polite and profoundly cold, were absolutely established between us.

I was on this footing with Amelia, when a great number of strangers arrived from Cracow, and among the rest Corinna and Ernest. "Do you know Corinna?" said I to Amelia.—"Exceedingly well; we were inseparable in Paris."—This discovery gave me great

pleasure, because it made Amelia less beautiful in my eyes.

Ernest appeared perfectly recovered from his wounds. He promised me his friendship, and let slip no opportunity of testifying it. He informed me that I passed for dead in France, and beyond a doubt in Holland also, where he had sent the two presents which I had lost, and which accident had put into the possession of Corinna.

After the arrival of the latter, I was more at my ease. Her friend went abroad constantly with her. I was more free; and I began to think myself out of all danger.

One day, Amelia begged me to come to her.—"Madam," said I, entering with a laughing air, "I am a culprit called before his judge, to guess from the cold and serious air with which I am received."—"Sir, I know not whether there is a culprit here, but I am sure there is a victim," said she, weeping.—

"Who is it can afflict you? Speak; there is nothing I would not undertake to be of service to you."—Julius, you are the cause of the most offensive rumours. Your reserve, your cold politeness, the strange and childish manner in which you avoid me, when chance brings us together in society, produce a very bad impression for me, and for yourself. Things are said of both of us to which it is of importance to put an end. We must be seen together, and you must be often in my company. Promise me this. I demand it of you. You have remarked among us more freedom of manner, perhaps, than elsewhere, but more fidelity. This quality is indispensable. The want of this is the only thing which is unpardonable among us. More indulgence of the heart, but also more regard and testimonies of esteem in the eyes of the world. I see you sad and solitary; I see that your inward feelings influence your health, and this afflicts me too. Be

more cheerful; shun not the pleasures; take those which belong to your age; those of retirement will come but too soon."

This language led me into some humiliating reflections, which Amelia combated, saying, "My young friend, avoid eccentricity; enjoy life; learn to distinguish, from my example, your duties from your happiness and pleasures."

I saw in these principles a sort of contradiction to those which she had displayed at the commencement of our connection; but she replied, "That when I should have more experience, I should know, that without ceasing to speak the truth, the heart had different languages for all the situations in which it could be placed."—Yes, Adolphus, she drew me into the world; I was obliged to be of a thousand so called parties of pleasure, whither I carried only an invincible disgust, and a feeble resolution to

disguise myself, which the first impressions speedily changed.

This, however, lasted for some time, because it appeared to me to be a kind of life which protected me from the snares and dangerous neighbourhood of Amelia. Her pretended pleasures produced a very good effect. Every evening, restored to my own apartment, the images of Maria and my sister appeared more amiable, more precious, than before. I delighted in seeing them before me, and offering up to them the sacrifice of my youth. "Ah!" said I, "If it pleases Heaven to prove me, of what have I to complain? Let us suffer and hope."

It appeared to me also, that the noisy company which I frequented, daily paid less and less attention to me. Amelia and Corinna alone seemed to be spies on me, to watch me; and discovered with each other an intimacy and mystery which were singular. I should hence have little longer endured this

permanent disorder, had not Amelia's house, on a sudden, become its principal theatre.

All persons of elegance, all the idlers of the city, hastened to it, and the Baroness desisted from every kind of constraint. Dances, concerts, promenades, and parties of pleasure, were her most important affairs. She was miserable if, through forgetfulness, the morning arrived before she knew to what diversion the day was destined. The house was then topsy-turvy. Every one was running in every direction, to learn this interesting news, and I, an incurious and melancholy spectator of the ridiculous eagerness, whether in the interior of the house, or at the window, felt myself ready to faint under the weight of repentance.

One day, I learned that Amelia was sick. I inquired after her, and was told that she suffered much. The next day, I had the same answer. In the evening,

I went to see her, and found her very low, and really much altered. She had been crying much, as was very visible still, in spite of her efforts to conceal it. I was desirous at first to abstain from asking explanations, in which I had been so unfortunate; but I have never been able to resist a woman's tears. I knew that women, when they resemble Amelia, are always actresses, and yet I was always their dupe. "What is the matter with you?"—"Julius, do you not see?" I looked at her, and I saw with surprise how much her size was increased. "What is it then," said I, with a bewildered air, for I began to suspect the truth. "It is thee, by thee, and for thee," replied she, reclining on my shoulder. A thunder-bolt fallen at my feet that instant, could not have confounded and terrified me more. "I have long known my condition," said she; "it was the cause of my mourning, and what I wished to apprize you

of, when I received you in my library, but which our mutual folly made me forget."

It would be difficult for me to paint exactly the state of my mind. Terrified by the gravity of my guilt, and its incalculable consequences, my first impulse was to fly, and escape, if possible, from the recollection; then, reflecting that I owed to the innocent creature more tender sentiments; "However guilty, Amelia, I may be," said I, "this child shall have nothing to reproach me with!'—I did not dare to say "*my* child," even though we were alone.—O Adolphus! what a punishment is the idea of being so far divested of nature, as to shrink even from the sentiment of paternity! that sentiment which is what Heaven has placed of the purest and most substantial in the heart of man! No; nothing can equal the bitterness of the sensation of this discovery in myself created. What a horrible weight pressed

down my heart from that moment! How I considered myself hateful! How truly so are those who can confer an illegitimate existence, and impress upon their child, upon its coming into the world, the seal of infamy! Nevertheless, I felt a sort of affection for Amelia; it was not love, but friendship. The idea that she suffered on my account, the idea that I was the cause of her shame, seriously attached me to her; it was only when she resumed her former tender and seductive airs, that I revolted from her. Strange caprice of the heart of man! Those dangerous situations which I had been unable to resist a few days before, inspired me with a sort of horror now, because Amelia's exterior incessantly presented to me the serious image of paternity, of the bonds which I had violated, and of my family.

Meantime, Amelia entertained a real tenderness for me. "The greater the sacrifice," said she, "the more is it

worthy of my love. Julius, could I do more than sacrifice to you my honour and my future life? no, or doubt it not I should have done it. That which should be my shame and punishment, will be my glory and happiness! Every thing which delivers me up more entirely to you, becomes to me the dearer."

I replied to these testimonies of friendship, by expressions of mine. I was deeply moved; but there was mixed, in the source of my tears, as much repentance for myself, as compassion for Amelia.

I held, in regard to her, a conduct which was not the result of reflection, but a natural movement which I could not restrain. I rendered her every attention imaginable, truly, openly, and scarcely left her all the day. I endeavoured to lighten and divert her sufferings, and I was more assiduous than any of the female friends who visited her. My conduct was approved by

every body. I read, especially in the countenances of the ladies, a perfect satisfaction; and, for myself, when shut up with the image of Hermacintha and Maria, I felt assured never to fall into new errors, if I could reach the end of this. I was resolved to fly, as soon as Amelia should be recovered.

One day, I heard a great number of carriages enter the court-yard, and I learned that all Amelia's family were come to see her. A little time after, I received a message from her, requesting me to come to her closet. I went immediately, and found her alone. "My friend," said she, "does your conscience say nothing in my favour?"—"To what does this singular question tend?" "Within a day, within an hour, in an instant, perhaps, I shall be a mother. Would you have her who has given herself up to you, would you have the mother of your child, dishonoured?"—"What would you ask of me?" "You

are free; guess the rest!" O Adolphus, how I recovered my strength at these cruel words! My conscience, doubtlessly, reproached me much; but, at the same time, it taught me how much more culpable I should have been, if I had betrayed Maria and my sister, and contradicted all the tenour of my life. This idea alone could render me unfeeling, cruel, and exasperated. "Amelia," said I, in a very serious tone, "I am engaged for ever, and you know it. I feel how much I am guilty; all my friendship, all my devotion, are due to you; I shall never cease to be your best friend, but never your husband. We cannot give away what is not our's; Never! never!" She made all the attempts possible, but always in vain. This terrible scene had lasted long. Amelia, almost as fatigued with it as myself, had ceased to make further efforts; when, after a moment's reflection, she exclaimed, rising from her seat, "Well!

answer, then, yourself, to my family." At these words, she opened a door, and went with me into the great drawing-room, where I found a score of men and women in full dress. "You see my family," said she.

I coolly bowed to the company, and immediately all the ladies made their efforts for Amelia, by addressing me with every useless argument; and, the gentlemen, too, one after another, employed a more elevated tone. "Sirs," said I, "you are gentlemen; I am afraid of none but assassins, for I wear a sword." Amelia, who saw that all this only soured me still more, changed the style of the negociation; but she succeeded neither in one way nor another, and I left them coldly, but politely.

In the evening, Amelia came to me, begging me, at the least, to acknowledge the child. "That is no more than just," said I; and I did not hesitate to do all that she asked on that subject. She

had every thing prepared. I read and re-read the paper, and then signed it. This seemed to reconcile us; but, I clearly saw that she was not entirely satisfied, and, in reality, I could not expect that she should be; her vexation was but too natural.

Meantime, her confinement did not take place. That moment, which I expected so anxiously, not arriving, I began to be alarmed on her account.

Ernest, whom I sometimes saw, showed himself very attentive to me. He sought me out, and seemed to wish for greater intimacy. One day, he invited me to take a ride without the city. He came at an early hour, and we soon reached the wood. There, he gave me to understand, that he had apprehensions as to the causes of grief and dejection which I was really unable to hide.

"Ernest," said I, "we have known one another for some time. I esteem you; you have valuable qualities, which

make up for the levity and impetuosity of your character. You are as sincere, generous, and to be depended upon, as it belongs to a French soldier to be. I therefore trust in you."

"You may," replied he. "I did not love you at Chambéri, because you were the friend of Adolphus, my rival; and because I thought you too much of a *philosopher* and not enough of a *chevalier*; but, since, at my expense, you have so thoroughly shown me that you are free at the collar, honest, and a gentleman, you may reckon upon me. What have you done to Corinna?

"Nothing."

"Yet she hates you; she hates your Maria, and resorts to every means to separate you."

"What say you?"

"It is what I cannot conceal from you longer, without running the risk of seeing you fall into snares."

"Dear Ernest, inform me, then, of

every thing which concerns me." And I informed him of every thing which had happened.

"Bravo! Julius; I congratulate you on your resistance; but learn that you are still the dupe of the Baroness, the most dangerous of syrens. She is married and divorced. She is not what she appears to you at first. She is the softest, and at the same time the most dissolute of coquets, as also the most perfidious and false. Will you have an unanswerable proof? Do you know this writing?"—He now showed me a copy of the acknowledgment which I had given to the Baroness. "This is not all," resumed Ernest; "more than forty or fifty copies of this writing are spread abroad in the city. The town is commenting on it; the skill of the composition is admired, and every one is astonished that you should have signed a promise of marriage."

"It is not——"

"Read it, then; 'I promise to render to the mother of my child every indemnity and reparation which she can require of a man of honour.' Are these words correct?"

"Certainly."

"Here, then, you are tricked."

"How?"

"Whenever Amelia pleases, she can oblige you to marry her, or at least can institute a process for that purpose; and I doubt not that the publicity which has been given to this paper, is the beginning of that proceeding. I do not think that you have to fear marriage, because the instrument is not sufficient, and because, beside, Amelia is an enemy to marriage, and to all restraint; but she wishes to separate you from Maria, and ruin your reputation."

"And for what purpose, Ernest?"

"You pleased Amelia at first. That could only last a moment; and if your connection has been prolonged, that is

only to be ascribed to Corinna, who makes use of her friend to destroy you. I could tell you more, if it were not right that I should confine myself to what is necessary to say to you. They have been long trying to get me half into the plot. I have refused with indignation, and only promised not to betray the two friends. Their wickedness, however, becomes too black ; and, as I have not been able to succeed in turning them from their designs, I come to give you warning of them, and to assure you that you may depend upon me as upon an old friend."

I testified to Ernest the most lively gratitude ; I promised to be his friend for ever ; and assuredly I will keep my word.

"You will ask me with astonishment," added Ernest, "why people should seek to ruin the reputation of others ? This is the result of that *perfectionizing* and progress of illumination

of our day, which the blind, like you and I, persist in misunderstanding.—Yes, Julius, formerly men were content to rob others of their property; but it is to the dishonouring them that they now attach the highest value. They do not hesitate, for this end, even to sacrifice their own fortunes. As, to seduce any one to vice, men do not march openly and strait to the object; so, here, they succeed against you most completely and most certainly, by crooked and winding ways. For example, by spreading abroad among the public a report which they dare not utter to the person directly interested, it reaches him with impunity. When two friends, or two lovers, have a dispute, there is much address, though you may not believe it, in him that is first to tell his story to the public, which, in the affairs of the world, as well as at the theatres, always take part with the first who presents himself to its attention. Oh! our modern philosophers ought to

be well satisfied. Their views are advancing bravely. Machiavelianism is introducing itself into the most private and familiar relations of mankind. We have, at present, more policy in our little intrigues of society, and more wickedness in our cunning toward those with whom or against whom we act. Take care of yourself, Julius; I repeat, that you may reckon upon me. Now that I have given you warning, I feel myself released from a heavy burden."

Oh! my friend, what did I not become on hearing these horrible words? I returned immediately to Amelia's, and, without appearing to be enraged, informed her that I should leave her house on the instant. She appeared to be astonished, and asked for explanations, which I refused, confining myself to thanks and the most cold politeness.

I did not leave the city, because that was forbidden me; beside, I had no

longer any precautions to take, and I embarrassed myself little about any thing which Amelia might say. From that time, I became taciturn, and of an inconceivable apathy. I was in incessant amazement at my situation, and so confounded, that I could scarcely believe it real. But how could I long maintain my illusion. I dared no longer look for Maria in my heart, and the image of the deceitful Amelia, always present to my sight, seemed to pursue me every where.

Oh! what a wretch is he, who receives, on awaking, the first beam of day with bitterness! Formerly, it filled me with purest joy, and a vivifying quietude! I open my eyes with sadness, and often I shut them again, seeking to protract the night and my dreams; and, when I cannot succeed, I cry out sorrowfully, "I am still alive!"—

How differently did not Amelia appear to me from this instant! I could

no longer discern those traits of sweetness, and that expression, which had seduced me. As soon as I knew her to be so contemptible, her beauty vanished from my eyes, and I could not discover, even in the recollection of her countenance, the charms with which I had been struck. If women knew how much they lose by ceasing to be virtuous, even their coquetry would be frightened at the thought!

Maria and Amelia were always in my imagination. The excellence of the one, and the hatefulness of the other, equally struck me; equally they taught me, that virtuous beauty is that in which we best trace the divine perfection.

Inhabiting the same country with Amelia, I saw with inexpressible sorrow of heart, how generally, without the possibility of hindrance, my connections with her were known, and how our names were mixed in the ideas and conversation of the public, notwithstanding

our separation. I made several attempts to induce her to restore the fraudulent paper which she had obtained from me, but to no purpose.

Sometimes, I thought of forcing its restitution by dint of law; but when I went about it, the mere word of lawsuit, the recollection of the past, made me revolt, to the degree that I changed my resolution; I feared to fill the public with this unworthy history. Sometimes, I resolved to lay by till a future day all consideration of the matter; but soon again the shame of retaining with Amelia that sort of connection which she publicly reported, reduced me to despair. I fell back into the greatest incertitude, and most cruel indecision.

Oh! how much has he to suffer, who, without advice, without a sincere friend, is sensible to the voice of honour and duty, and who sees himself menaced with dangers of the greatest magnitude, dangers the most extreme, most immi-

nent, and most opposite! Among so many parts to take, one alone is the true one; but how is it to be known, amid the bonds by which we are engaged, when, unable to forget either the past or the approaching future, the frightful consequences present themselves on all sides to the imagination, with their sharpened points and mortal injuries, which he is unable to avoid. In vain he asks of Heaven to direct him; if the storm begins to growl, if the earth shakes, if the impetuous blasts of the winds suddenly rise, and seem to call for his quick decision, how, amid the hurly, is he to distinguish the voice of Providence? What will she bid him do? What path will she point out to him to follow?

O Adolphus! I, who once aspired to an ineffable happiness, hsve not obtained even the common lot! If, in my boyhood (you remember it,) I had been promised the condition of the happiest man alive, I should have rejected the pro-

phecy with disdain. It seemed to me, that I alone should be more wise than others; that I alone should have reached the true felicity. My future seemed filled with love and fortune; and when my first separation deprived me of all I loved, when I was stricken, for the first time, with the idea, *that we must die, that every thing passes away, that death and life reign and succeed each other alike*, what projects did I not form! Maria was always their object; I laid out time and events according to my ardent imagination; I bent them to my will. After the first campaign I shall be restored to repose, and to the accomplishment of my wishes, said I to myself. When that period failed me, I placed my hopes on the first armistice, and afterward on a peace. But the war is prolonged; events have dragged me with them; exile, wounds, and evils of all kinds have been my share; and, what is still worse, I have lost the fruits of my

past life, and poisoned all its future! What do I say? There is no future left for me; or, if there is, it is all at which I formerly revolted, the vulgar future of the crowd of men contemptible and gross—to vegetate, to suffer, and to die! The day in which I should fulfil the scheme of my whole life, and gather the fruit of my good conduct, of my meditations and my experience, will come never! I have lost all in leaving Maria; I have not known how to guide myself, since Hermacintha has ceased to be my guide. Alas! I shall expiate, at tedious length, my errors! Thus it is, perhaps, with all men, my dearest Adolphus! we pass one part of our life without reflection; a second, in searching out our welfare; but that in which we should enjoy ourselves arrives never!

I made new attempts to rejoin you, or at least to obtain news of you. Not only they did not succeed, but the imperfect accounts we had from France

informed us, that all persons were put to death who were detected in any foreign correspondence whatever. I knew that a burdensome treaty had opened Holland to France; yet I hoped that my friends were at the Hermitage. What would have been my terror and affliction, had I known that they were exposed to all the rage of factions!

From time to time I heard the world talking of Amelia, in a manner which increased my sorrows by increasing my shame. I learned, that after our separation she had kept no bounds, giving herself up to pleasure with so much the more avidity, as she had long imposed upon herself a constraint, extremely painful, but necessary to the part she had to play. At length, I heard that she was delivered as she left a ball-room, and at the same time, that her son was dead.

O Adolphus! do you conceive the situation of my mind at this news? Be not astonished at this state of things in

Austria, where the government stands pre-eminent in morals and religion, where the sovereigns have found the secret of maintaining morals upon the throne, and, among the people, the freedom and the ease of living of the most wise republic. Amelia, though an inhabitant of Austrian Poland, did not belong to this part of the ancient kingdom. All her immense possessions were in the other Polish provinces, so that she enjoyed in Austria the privileges of her birth, which gave her an absolute independence as to her manners and private conduct.

It was now that Ernest put the seal upon his friendship for me. Proceedings were already commenced against me.* Amelia, directed by Corinna, was resolved on forcing me to marry her; when my friend, Ernest, without my knowledge, pursued my interests so decidedly with Corinna, that she gave up to him the equivocal writing which I

had signed, and which he brought to me in triumph.

I made attempts to resume in society that confidence and cool demeanour which becomes every sensible man. I could not succeed, and I resolved at length to tear myself away from this species of slavery.

I could not be permitted to quit the province; but I obtained leave to go a distance of a dozen miles from the city, where the celebrated warm baths had been recommended to me for my wounds, and the rheumatisms which I already began to feel. I went there; and there, my friend, what was I struck with but our wanderings and follies? These places, designed for health, these medicinal retreats, seemed to me rather the dominion of debauchery and disorder, springs of poison and causes of sickness, chagrins, and perversity of life. The inhabitants of the spot, whatever may be their property or condition, are people

destitute of liberality, and even of humanity. They see nothing but the purses of strangers. The gold, which they love, which they continually hunger after, is the single thing which reaches their eyes. If one really sick demands their solicitude or friendship, they hear him not; they have no solicitude but for his gold. Incapable of feeling a real attachment, they cannot conceive that you have any thing to say to them, that there can be any relationship between you, from the time your bill is paid, unless it be to begin fresh expenses.

As to the visitors, it is here that we see assembled together the honest and really sick, and a crowd of motley intruders. Some come in search of pleasures, others of dupes, others again, under pretext of flying from a husband, or a wife, or from inconvenient duties, or from unaccommodating parents. Assignations are made months beforehand, and God knows whether they profit by the

entire liberty which they necessarily enjoy, because it is the custom of the baths! This is a privilege, which the proprietors will not suffer to fall into disuse. They know too well their own advantage. Sterility, &c. and the megrim of the elegant part of society, are the disorders which they are most successful in curing. I have seen the keepers of the gaming-tables, surrounded by bullies and women of the finest appearance and the greatest beauty; I have seen these vampires negociate with the magistrates of the place, and whole families of weak people ruin themselves, without being permitted to do any thing but complain, because robbers and assassins had bought the privilege of plundering them.

An interesting family was at the waters, at the same time with myself. The wife was afflicted with a real and dangerous disorder. The waters did her much good, and she began to entertain

the hope that they would stop the progress of her complaint, which was visibly leading her to death. Her husband and she had come from a great distance, and resorted to great economy to meet the expenses of their journey, and their stay at the baths. The mother and her children were enjoying themselves, amid the happiest prospects, when the husband, till then an honest and prudent man, came to tear his wife from her bed of pain, and force her to return home. The infatuated wretch had lost at play, not only every thing which they had brought for the supply of their necessities, but even the value of the jewels and trinkets belonging to his wife! It is difficult to form an idea of my pain at this occurrence. Their departure was heart-breaking. "I shall never come back again," said the wife; and the husband, who followed her, absorbed in the idea of the dice which had caused his ruin, exclaimed, "Unfortu-

nate throw! unfortunate! unfortunate throw!"

I should never have done were I to tell you all the frightful, and all the ridiculous things I witnessed at these baths.

I fell dangerously ill toward the end of my stay. No longer those assiduous cares, those gentle consolations of my divine sister! The greatest of my sorrows still consisted in my not being able to recur to those beloved names, to communicate to them incessantly my thoughts. When these turned toward Maria and Hermacintha, sorrow wrung my heart, and I was even miserable enough to fear that I should never behold them again.

I recovered, nevertheless, thanks to my excellent constitution; and scarcely was I convalescent, when came the happy news of peace, and that I was free!—You think, Adolphus, that my first movement was to fly to you, and to them, and that I was instantly filled

with the liveliest joy. No; I felt only a profound melancholy. He that is separated from his happiness, and cannot reach it, is doubtlessly very miserable; but he that does not feel the desire to reach it, is still more to be pitied!

I resolved to begin by approaching myself gradually toward you, and I have fixed myself, for the present, in this solitary but romantic place.

You see that I have been very far from disguising my mistakes, my wanderings, or my faults. Adolphus, what melancholy truths age discovers to us every day! How imperfect is man! How many contrasts, contradictions, follies, and errors are not united in him! How much has this been proved by my conduct, and, at the same time, how often have I been painfully humiliated by the conduct of my fellow-creatures!

The same men, who shed tears at a theatre, completely melted by the

smallest voice of pain or injustice, a moment after demonstrate that they themselves are hard-hearted, unjust, and even cruel!

I have seen the multitude applaud the false eloquence of a celebrated pleader; I have seen men of reputation in society show themselves the supporters of the guilty, and glory in their triumph; and how many times have I not blushed to be a man!

I have seen hungry dogs gnawing the disgusting carcase of a stronger animal than themselves; and, at a little distance, men, impelled by want, either in the army or in the chace, disputing with each other with rage, for rags of the palpitating flesh of a feeble lamb, which had previously licked the hands of its butchers.

I have seen a father, a brother, and a son, even after the heat of battle, cut the throat of a defenceless old man;

I have seen the brains of an infant beat out in its cradle; and a young girl dying under bloody embraces!

I have seen old age, ready to descend into the grave, deny itself nourishment, in order to increase, by a farthing, a cup of gold, which it will not carry with it into its tomb; I have seen men without pity for the wretch dying for want, for the labourer earning by the sweat of his brow the obulus insufficient for his painful existence; and the rich lavishing their treasures upon artificial and useless wants!

I have seen the dying man fear to die, and mistrust his Creator!

I have seen men deny conscience and pain; and even Heaven, while they were looking at it!

I have seen men considered as vile instruments, as brittle objects, which other men threw away and broke to pieces without regret! I have heard a

minister of state say, that he had *spent* so many men in a campaign!

I have seen the laws made by the strong for the weak; followed by the latter at the peril of their lives, while those who made them, violated them with effrontery, at the choice of their caprices!

I have seen a crime punished, here, by a pecuniary fine, and, on the neighbouring frontier, the same crime punished with death!

I have seen men go like sheep to certain death, led by the two phantoms of honour and glory! I have seen the peaceable inhabitants of a country murdered by their fellow-creatures; I have seen others boast of it, and be rewarded!

I have seen a blind man seek his happiness and pleasures by robbing himself of all the means of attaining them; be convinced, and make no change!

I have seen force only acknowledged

as right, and obedience as duty. Adultery punished by the laws, and honoured in society!

I have seen that contradiction, weakness, inconstancy, error, folly, inconsistence, cruelty and selfishness, are the things most real in the life of man; and I feel that I shall be always unhappy, or, at least, that if Maria may still will the contrary, I never shall be happy with that happiness which we figured to ourselves in our innocent childhood; and that so many delicious hopes of our early years are all for ever lost!

LETTER LXII.

From Julius to Adolphus.

Behold me, then, at that Hermitage so much desired; behold me near my sister, and not far from Maria, under the same roof. But her husband—O Adolphus! what a frightful word for a lover, for the lover of Maria! Ought I to have expected all I have learned? But you are acquainted with these events, and I will spare you the detail of my sufferings.

After the two first days, I saw with surprize how little attention the Duke paid to Maria. He was to proceed in the route of her whom he calls—whom he may call—his wife, for the first three days. Business obliged him then to turn toward Paris. I laid my plan so,

that one of the outriders of the ladies always met mine at the post-house of the place where they were to sleep. I knew the places at which they meant to stop; and at every place my people caused them to be told, by an inhabitant of the place, and without showing themselves, that a lodging was ordered for them at the place they intended. I always arrived there ten or twelve hours before them; and twenty-four hours before that, the people had already begun their preparations, so that Maria found herself in the most comfortable lodgings possible. I knew her taste and habitudes. Very often, her chamber resembled that which she had at the Hermitage; but, admire the effect of chance, in not a single instance did it recall the aspect of her chamber at the Duke's! This latter set forward at an early hour, and at first he went on horseback. The ladies gave him the credit of the little attentions which I gave Maria. The second

day, I met the Duke in a post-chaise with La Corali. As we were going at a swift pace, he did not recognize me; but the actress saw me, and made me an inclination. He had doubtlessly met the lady at a place of rendezvous.

In the evening, I was at the lodgings, concealed, when the ladies alighted. They seemed to me to be fatigued. "Oh! what a delightful surprize," said she to Hermacintha; "only see, we are at home."—"Yes, my dear, at home," and Hermacintha embraced her tenderly. I saw Maria's tears ready to start. "Is it the Duke?" said she. "And who else?" replied Hermacintha.—"He is very polite: he is becoming good and amiable again: but all is the same to me; pains ill bestowed!"

The next day, the party slept at a solitary inn, in the midst of a forest. La Corali not being able to put with it, and it being, beside, too small for the Duke to lodge at, he gave notice, that he

should go on, the same day, to the neighbouring town, and thence to Paris. I had made inconsiderable preparations, yet such as appeared enormous to the half-savage inhabitants. When they saw the ladies arrive with trunks, parcels, and boxes, they imagined that they had treasures with them. Maria felt an impulse of fear on alighting from the carriage, at the sight of the solitary aspect of the place, and the savage figures and hard features of the inhabitants. When she saw the great room and little chamber which were prepared for them, " I know not how it is, Hermacintha," said she, " but I think the Duke cannot be acquainted with all the little mementos which this appearance and arrangement presents to me in all our lodgings. It must be one of our own party. It is you, sister, who tell them what they ought to do; but let it cease, and if you would have me support my life, do not surround me always with images

which bring back my infancy and the Hermitage."

I had strong reasons for being suspicious of these ill-looking people. On arriving, I had eaten something which tasted very badly, but fortunately a little tea, which I took in time, relieved me. What, however, gave my suspicions, was the manner in which the old woman looked at every thing about me, and seeing me and my servants well armed, and a little disconcerted, "God bless me!" cried she, "take some milk; this is nothing; it is only something which we keep to kill the rats."

Immediately, I settled my plan. It was impossible to go further without the consent of our hosts, who were at the same time the post-masters. My servants had provisions with them, and we made a fire near a clear and limpid spring. I caused a lamb and some pullets to be killed before my own eyes, and I had an indescribable pleasure,

Adolphus, in superintending, myself, the preparation of Maria's supper. An excellent fricassee was made with milk taken from the cow in my presence. We had bread enough for the three ladies and the infant, and excellent water. When Maria arrived, Mademoiselle de Melrode received the provisions from our own hands. The ladies ate heartily, and without suspecting the true motives of these precautions.

After supper, I hid myself in a corner of the hay-loft, above the two chambers of the ladies, and which was separated from them only by open rafters. My three servants and my courier had each his post outside, unknown to the robbers. I was at ease, therefore, on this head; but what, nevertheless, Adolphus, were my feelings, when, in the middle of the night, contemplating the agitated sleep of the unfortunate Maria, by the feeble light of an iron lamp which was fastened to the black and dirty wall, I saw her

muscles convulsed! Presently, on a sudden, whether my eyes were for a moment closed, or that the robbers had secret entrances, I saw a tall man of sunburnt complexion, with haggard eyes, and red hair, advance into the chamber in which Maria reposed. His aged wife, not less hideous than himself, followed with the greatest precaution. She walked on tip-toe, making signs to her husband to keep silence; each with a finger on the mouth, and a knife in hand.—"All the doors are fastened," said she; "make sure at the first blow; the others will do the rest."

I could refrain no longer. The loft, as is the custom in the farm-houses in Westphalia, was open to the chambers below. I fired my pistols on these wretches, and with a leap, placed myself by the side of Maria's bed. But this had nearly lost us all. She awoke terrified, and, without recognizing me, yet seeing that I defended her, she fastened

herself to my arm, and held it so strongly as to prevent me from making use of it. Happily, I had wounded the man; and the woman, half dead with fear, was crouched in a corner. Her husband made attempts to reach me, but was unable, through loss of blood. "Well, then," said he to his wife, "go and give that scaramouch a knock; are you such a coward; can't you move?" She approached me, and Maria would not let me move, whatever effort I made. At length, I heard a noise. "It is our people," said the old woman, stopping on her way, and going to her husband, and laughing with a hideous and frightful expression. The doors were broke open; but it was my servants. We carried the wretches out of doors, and went to Hermacintha, who was locked, she did not know, into her room. She had heard the noise, and you may judge of her disquietude.

We wished to go forward, but there

were no horses. I then determined on taking the ladies out of the house, for fear of any new treason. We lit a large fire; the ladies lay down on two beds of heath, and my people kept watch around the bivwac, while I had charge of the robbers, who were strongly fastened to a great chesnut-tree at a little distance, as well for the sake of security, as to keep me out of sight of Maria. I knew what her emotion would be on seeing me, and how little she was prepared.

During the remainder of this cruel night, we heard long whistlings in the woods, by which the ladies were much alarmed. We were on the alert for all events; but happily nothing worse than the noises occurred. Daylight appeared. Many peasants assembled, and the bailiff of the seigniory arrived, who, perhaps, was himself one of the robbers. He signified his approbation, however, of my conduct, caused the wounded man to be

dressed, and ordered that he, with his wife, should be carried to the neighbouring town; put his seal upon the house, and accompanied us himself on our way.

I endeavoured, during all the time, to hide myself; and, thanks to Hermacintha and Maria's fright, I succeeded. She had asked to whom she owed her safety; my courier showed himself by order, and she gave all her thanks to him. Within a few hours we reached the town, where we were to make our depositions. The bailiff had placed upon the carriage which conveyed the robbers every thing which had been found in their house, and, among other things, meats similar to those of which I had partaken at my arrival. A quantity was given, by order of the magistrate, to a hungry dog which was brought into his presence; and the poor animal died before my eyes.

As we were detained in the little

town longer than I had expected, I did not reach our next lodgings till a few hours before night. All was ready, but the ladies did not arrive. The delay alarmed me, but I was persuaded to believe all safe. I contented myself with sending back my courier; but he stayed too long to come back to me; and I retraced my steps, and met him half way. He informed me, that the ladies rested at next post-house, on account of their unusual fatigue, and the illness of the infant. I continued my way, and alighted without noise at the inn where they were. This, also, was an insulated house; but the inhabitants had the appearance, looks, and behaviour of honest people. They knew every thing which had passed the night before, and congratulated us on the danger we had escaped assuring us, that the public voice had long accused the offenders of being assassins, and, that without doubt, what had happened to us would bring their crimes to light.

I learned that Maria, notwithstanding the precautions and attentions of the hosts, could not compose herself. Her alarms were principally on account of the infant. I found that her spirits had suffered much agitation from the scene of the preceding evening. Upon this, I contrived a means of tranquillizing her, and engaged several peasants to watch round the house. I made them carry arms, and perform their rounds about the house; and when twelve o'clock struck, (this was the hour at which the attack had been made the night before) I seated myself under the windows, and sung, in a disguised voice, the words which I now send you :—

SERENADE.

Bonne Marie,
Va reposer dans ce logis.
Disparoissez, sombres soucis,
Loin de Marie!
Fuyez, et ne troublez jamais
L'aimable gite
Où la vertu s'endort en paix.
Fuyez bien vite!

Bonne Marie,
Repose tes jeunes appas ;
L'amitié veille sur tes pas.
Bonne Marie,
Ne crains rien, dors en sûreté.
A ta presence,
Fuit, comme au jour l'obscurité,
La malfaisance.

Pour toi, Marie,
Tous nos vœux seront exaucés ;
Déjà tous les chants cessés
Dans la prairiè ;
Dans la paisible obscurité
La nuit s'avance,
Ramenant la tranquillité
Et le silence.

This song produced the effect I wished. My sister and Maria came to the window as I finished. I heard the sweetest of voices say, "We thank you, my friends; good night."

When we had reached the frontier of Holland, I hired carriages of the country. I succeeded in procuring an old one which Maria knew very well; and

when the party reached the post-house, they were informed that a carriage had been ordered for them. "Who," asked my sister?—"The Duke without doubt." But when they had seen it, "O Hermacintha," cried Maria; "it is ours; do you not know it again?"

At length, they reached the Hermitage. I was with them without being seen. I could judge of their emotion. I saw Maria, from the moment of alighting from the carriage, run through all the places which we had most frequented in our early years. Hermacintha's pavilion, the Isle of Rose-trees, the farms, all received a visit. The good peasants were at the height of joy. No fire-works nor formal rejoicings, but true and complete satisfaction. The orphans had placed themselves at the entrance of the château. They pressed round their benefactress; and their tears and emotion were a surer and more substantial testimony of the sincerity of

their sentiments than the finest speeches could have offered. Maria felt only pleasing sensations during the whole of this delightful evening. What were my transports to hear her say, "O Hermacintha, O my sister, why came we not sooner hither! It is long since I have been so well. It seems to me that I am becoming what I was again; it seems to me, that he breathes in this atmosphere!"

Fidelle escaped from Maria the next morning, and came in search of me in my concealment in the park. He returned afterward to the château, and scratched at the door of Maria, who was unable to comprehend any thing of his playful joy. I followed him. "Sister," said Maria, running to Hermacintha, "is it really true that he is still alive?"—"Yes, Maria, he lives; he will be here soon."—"Ah! he is here now; every thing persuades me so; I have a presentiment." — "Dear child, are you

sedate enough to have a secret intrusted to you?"—What other than he could have saved you, that cruel night? What other could have borne the pain which he suffers from the constraint to which he is condemned, and which he does not presume to overleap?"—"What! it was he who saved me! he whom, through fright, I held so strongly to my bed, who served me for a shield against the blows of assassins, it was he? O my God, I give thee thanks! nothing now is wanting to my infant; it owes its life to Julius." Then, she recalled a thousand circumstances which ought to have betrayed me, but of which she had suspected nothing. "Let him come," said she, eagerly.

I sprung into the chamber, and threw myself at her feet. She received me in her arms. She was beside herself, and knew not what she did. Yet, at the moment when her cheek touched mine, she trembled, and fell with all her weight

into my sister's arms. I pressed my lips upon her hand. She turned again toward me, but scarcely had she looked at me, when her tears flowed in abundance. She covered her eyes with her handkerchief. I could not speak. Several times I tried in vain. "Come," said Hermacintha, "let us sit down." Our silence continued for some time. At length, Maria spoke, and asked me some questions of myself. I told her nearly what I have written to you, and which Hermacintha knew before, by my letter. I heard all that has happened to you, and when we separated it was day-light. Ask me not what passed within me at this time: I cannot express it.

LETTER LXIII.

From Julius to Adolphus.

I AM again at the happy Hermitage, I have once more found Hermacintha and Maria, and yet nothing appears to me the same. I feel too sensibly that my heart is changed. Premature experience, and griefs rather than years, have rendered me another man. The charms of the country formerly filled me with a delicious sentiment; but now, I think I see upon every object the marks of the misfortunes by which I am withered.

I have discovered Maria's emblem; it is a tree torn up by a storm, and round it are the words of the well-known motto, *Venga l'iverno.** Ah! it is mine also; hope is over with us!

* Let winter come!

Formerly, when winter approached, far from being melancholy, I thought that Maria and I should be oftener together. I wished for the long evenings, when, all drawn together, we passed, warm by the fire-side, such delightful moments. Hermacintha reserved for that rigorous season an increased familiarity, endearing conversations, readings long premeditated, chosen with discernment, and still more agreeable than instructive; and that cheerfulness, the fruit of innocence and peace of heart, of an ordered understanding, and the delicacy of a pure imagination. Now, I tremble at winter. During the day, the cold will benumb my limbs, and all my frame; all, except my late and useless regrets. No intimacy with Maria; sorrow ill-concealed in my sister; and I still on my feet, waiting for the hour when I am to fall for ever.

Already the leaves grow yellow; scarcely fallen yet, the winds strip them

away, to carry them into other fields. The sky is no longer so pure nor tranquil. The cold is about to fall on the earth; the air seems to hold it suspended: it comes. Alas! why did chance bring me back into my native country, at a season which so much resembles my situation? It was in the spring that I left it, afflicted, but rich in love, hope, and the prospect of the future; it is at the end of autumn that I return to it, when my soul, like entire nature, seems to commence its death; when the deadly cold of misfortune, like the frost upon the earth, gains on me more and more.

The first, nay, the two first days of my arrival, I was more satisfied. Hermacintha, Maria, and myself, equally moved by the presence of beings and places which are dear to us, found ourselves, involuntarily, in our former state of familiarity. But since reflection has succeeded to first feelings, they have taken counsel with each other, and I see

a new system establishing itself. The name of *cousin* has taken place of that of Julius. The Duke is often spoken of. The strictest order prevails in the apartment of the ladies, and I am treated almost as a stranger.

The Duke, whose fortune is not entirely re-established, designs to display in Paris considerable magnificence, and he makes a pretext of the great preparations which he says he is obliged to make, to keep his wife at a distance from him. The latter desires eagerly to rejoin him, notwithstanding his faults and her wrongs. She speaks of her journey freely, and without affectation. Hermacintha is to leave her also. What a separation! I tremble to think of it. I shall see the last link between us broken.

Thrown into a strange family, united to a detestable husband, but on whom she has bestowed sacred and indestructible rights, as she is fond of saying, she will have, to sustain her, the caresses of

her infant, her virtue, her innocence, and the remembrance of my errors.—If you knew what I feel, when, forgetting myself in the midst of these dear companions, I presume to complain, by any half-expression, of her respect and consideration for her husband, I hear these terrible words, which the stifled sighs and tearful looks that accompany them cannot soften—"Is there any news from Poland?" Frightful question, which recalls my true situation. "It is I alone who am guilty," say I then: "I merit my fate. Suffer, suffer, Julius, for you deserve it." If I cast a secret look on my sister, what blushes, what inward pain, what trouble, I see in that protecting angel, for her brother! The Duke receives no letters from his wife, but Mademoiselle de Melrode regularly gives him news of the infant.

Since Maria and I have met again, we have had a slight explanation. She has promised me another, and I hope even to

obtain permission to write to her. This indulgence is needful to me, Adolphus. I have too much respect for Maria to fear any thing from the nature of my sentiments; but I could not bear, my friend, to lose the smallest part of her esteem, nor, I will say further, of her friendship. I wish to know what she is to me. I believe her still my friend, but she is no more than that; and I feel that I am myself incapable of being more. My heart is closed on love for ever, but I could not bear the idea of having lost Maria's. It was my treasure, my life, my happiness: I should be inconsolable if it were torn from me; and yet, notwithstanding all you may say, I have in me no remains of unhallowed fire, no passion of self-love. She ought to grant me her pardon also; and, along with that assurance, I would have another, that her heart and her affections belong to none but me. If I could succeed in these, I could yet find some charms in

life. What is all I ask for? That alone which she owes to me, and nothing of what the world requires of her. Let her ungrateful husband live with her; let him enjoy her society, her caresses even, if that is still possible, but if he has not Maria's heart, I can endure it; and, for the rest, I ask only, what she gives to every one, to see her, to speak to her, to be near her.—An enemy put aside, who can wish me less?

LETTER LXIV.

From Adolphus to Julius.

In what a course thou proceedest, my friend! While I feared that even Maria herself could not cure thy misanthropy, and bring thee back to the love of life, I see thee as young and as love-sick as formerly. I fear that thy passion, newly kindled, will not submit to restraint. Be

sure that it is past remedy, if thou hast not perceived the inconsistences contained in thy last letter. Thy heart is closed against love, thou sayest, and thou wouldest not have Maria love her husband, and thou wouldest have her love none but thee! Thou askest only to see and speak to her, like every one else; and yet thou art not content to be treated as a brother!—Reflect, my friend; these inconsistences will prove to thee that thy reason condemns the desires of thine heart. The disorder and commotion of thine ideas demonstrate that of thy sentiments: thou lovest as warmly as heretofore, but without the calm which then resulted from the hope and innocence which thou hast alike lost.—Change, then, thy resolution. Know thyself better. Fly from Maria. Fly from thy sister. Come to thy friend; thou art running the greatest dangers. I tremble at discovering in thee the sentiments which I see. Fly, I tell thee.

Wouldest thou ruin Maria? After having betrayed thy early love, after having lived in a guilty connection, after having been almost lost through one fault, wouldest thou not even avoid the last and deepest? We judge badly of ourselves. I know not whether Maria loves thee; but as to thee, my friend, I am but too sure of thy sentiments. Thou wouldest remain near her, see her, hear her, live fraternally and familiarly with her. O blindness! Thou, who wast not able to resist the charm of this kind of life with a coquet, wilt thou resist it with her whom thou honourest as a perfect creature?—Drive away these subtleties of an ill-stifled affection, striving to develope itself. Thy heart is still the same; thy misfortunes have not changed it. Amelia is the only woman thou hast known; but for her, thou wouldest be thyself. Wouldset thou seduce Maria? If thou couldest accomplish it, how frightful would be thy situation! Thou hast to

fear the sufferings of a hopeless love if thou art no longer virtuous; those of remorse if thou art: for it is impossible that Maria does not love thee still, if not as formerly, at least more than any other. Alone with these ladies, while the Duke misconducts himself toward his wife, and repulses her to a distance, dost thou not fear that suspicion will reach you both?

In thy place, I should prefer a want of friendship in Maria, her perfect indifference, her forgetfulness, to the dangerous friendship which thou desirest, and thou shouldest dread to attain. That love, ill-disguised under another name, would not rest a moment without increasing: I see it by thy letters. Without Hermacintha, without the impossibility in which thou well knowest that thou art, even to make thyself heard, it would be already irremediable. Hasten, then, to fly!—Come! my arms are open to thee! My Adelaide will receive thee as a brother, thou wilt be a witness of the hap-

piness thou hast lost; but thy regrets will be diminished by the hope of one day obtaining, with another Maria, that which I enjoy.

I know that this language will offend thee; that thou wilt, perhaps, tear my letter in anger; but remember, Julius, the counsel thou gavest thy friend, when Corinna had so blinded him that he despised Adelaide; and judge, by my example, that happiness may be found in the bosom of love and friendship. Shall I venture to say every thing? He that thinks of the wife of another, whatever may have been his relations to her, whatever may be those which subsist between her and her husband, is a guilty man;—if, in addition, she whom he loves lives under the same roof with him, and is confided to him—he is a monster.

Now, there reaches my ear—"Notable moralist!" wilt thou say, "it becomes thee to be severe and rigorous, thou who—" Finish not the sentence,

Julius. Thou wouldest deceive thyself. Never did Adolphus carry affliction into a family: never has he held a connection, doubly guilty, with the wife of another. I have been young, it is true; and still, at present, if a young girl blooms in my eyes in the freshness of beauty, I am sensible to her charms, and I adore a sex which appears to me the source and depositary of all the happiness, all the pleasures, and all the sweets of life; but, from the moment that the least libertinism or contempt joins itself with these sensations, I become as marble. I will explain myself: there are no women, in the great number of those whom I have loved, whom I have not believed myself to love truly; there are several whom, before being acquainted with them, I have known to be contemptible It was only in effacing this impression, in making me believe the contrary, that I was seduced; and that which has afterward saved me from the snares of coquets,

has been the contempt with which they have speedily inspired me. I know that this system implies a contradiction. Not to love the wife of another because we should despise her, and then to love a young girl, or a widow, whom we cannot esteem, seem to thee two contradictory things. I know that this is a whimsical part of my character; but I was fortunate enough, in good time, to capitulate with my conscience. When I have seen myself about to surrender at discretion, like so many others, not being able to preserve myself unhurt, I nevertheless kept myself above the lowest rank. My errors have cost the tears of none. No honest man need blush at my look, nor I at his.

If I have been so inconstant among women, it is their own fault. I left them at the moment when they were going to leave me; and I am sure none have been rendered unhappy by my forsaking them, for none have failed to give

me a successor. I know that it is possible to be more moral; that other young men are of better habits and more regular conduct; nevertheless, there has never been a woman whom I have loved without esteeming her, and without being persuaded that I could esteem no other so much as her. Yes, in spite of that giddiness with which you so often reproached me, I felt that my heart and my senses were different things; that in the midst of the excesses of pleasure, my heart was not sufficiently filled. When, in the arms of my Adelaide, I found, notwithstanding my hasty experience, an unknown charm, an entire communication of my being, I learned what it was which I had always wanted. I assured Adelaide of my constancy, I confessed all my former faults, and declared to her that there had always wanted something to me before.—" I know it," said Adelaide; if I had not guessed it, we should never have been united. I pity you for

having sacrificed your days to false pleasures; your wife shall make you amends." She has well kept her word; and, since my marriage, there has never been a moment in which I was not hers in thought and deed.

LETTER LXV.

From Julius to Maria.

I MAY insist on my demands, cousin; be not offended.

When younger, and so near to happiness, you refused me those innocent familiarities which I so ardently desired, I was bound to respect and cherish your decision. To support my resignation, I was in possession of two motives of equal force; I had not long to suffer, and every privation was soon to turn to my own advantage.

Now, it is no longer the same. Both

made aged by events, we have each an equal acquaintance with our hearts, the world, and our own sentiments. Strengthened by experience and time, we have nothing to fear from the temptations of youth. Condemned to one eternal privation, why force upon ourselves others? Let us live, cousin, as on the first days of our arrival. Let us live fraternally. Confidence, friendship, and, above all, indulgence. Maria! Maria! am I not tried? Suffer yourself to love; what have you to fear from me?

LETTER LXVI.

From Maria to Julius.

Cousin,

It is a proof that we do not live as strangers, that we have no need of written correspondence. We see each other daily. Nevertheless, since you abso-

lutely desire it, I have told Hermacintha that I would reply to you; and I repeat by this writing, that if you wish for any change which your sister approves, I am ready to make it. It is, therefore, to our elder, our tutoress, that you must address yourself.

LETTER LXVII.

From Julius to Maria.

Ah! Maria, you elude my requests. My sister and you understand each other well! If you refuse to treat me as I deserve, I will go—I will go far from my sister; I will go I know not where, for you are both here.—

LETTER LXVIII.

From Maria to Julius.

COUSIN,

I AM ashamed for your sake, and vexed to continue this foolish correspondence with you who live under the same roof with myself; but I feel that I must do it once for all; for ever—be sure to remember that.

Among the smallest of the troubles of my life is not to be reckoned that which results from the state of mind in which I behold you. I derive some little comfort from my abode under the paternal roof. Order. peace, and innocence, suffice me; suffice your sister. You alone are not contented. Are you so much changed? If you are, why not long conceal it from us; why not for ever?—You desire that we should live more familiarly; you do

not know, then,--that I am married? I had thought that event of sufficient concern to Julius, that he should not have forgotten it so soon, any more than my infant, to whom I owe every moment.

You talk of the sentiments which possess us. It is true that I was formerly given up to one alone, from which I expected the happiness of my life; at present, I conquer those I feel. Friendship, confidence, and devotion, those sentiments are given you. I speak not of indulgence, I have as much need of it as you; but I doubt whether you are so certain of your sentiments as you think; for you know not, Julius, what you desire. Give me your attention: you ask vague things. Ought we to be nearer one another?—If I had not been nursed and educated on this spot, be sure that I should not remain here. You oblige me to reflect, that, perhaps, we are in an improper situation. Sepa-

rated from my husband, it is quite natural that I should be here, but it is less so that you should be here also. Does not every one know that we were to have been united? I do not say this to drive you away.—No; I would not separate the sister from the brother; I know all the sorrow it would occasion her, she who sacrifices her life and happiness to me! Far from loading her with new griefs, I would joyfully make her still greater sacrifices, if that were possible. If you go, she will leave me; doubt it not.

Suffer myself to love, do you say, Julius? Either you have not reflected on what you wrote, or Maria's heart is ill known to you. If I loved you otherwise than as a brother, as a dear relation and friend, I should cease to live; I should be too much abased in my own eyes. I keep your friendship, but I will accept no other sentiments. For my regard for your character, for the esteem

which I wish to retain for you, I would have you entertain no other. Condemned to one eternal privation, why, say you, should we impose upon ourselves others? I remark with concern how much your short letter is filled with inconsistences. You confess that we are condemned to an eternal separation, and yet you wish that we should live together more freely; another proof that you have not reflected upon your desires, or that you do not know what they are. To what end this freedom, setting aside its want of recommendation to me, and to Hermacintha, who never approved it, even when a near hope appeared to justify it? It could only have the effect of misleading us, and kindling sentiments guilty in themselves, and, perhaps, but ill restrained on one side. We are no longer children, and cannot be allowed to shut our eyes on the world as it is.

Ah! Julius, your sister, to whom I

have shown your letter, is severely afflicted. She knows the world better than I. It is the language of perversion, says she; Julius is gone astray. He employs a harmless word to express a fearful idea: it is a guilty fraternity which his heart desires; and, in fact, if you desire only a closer fraternal union, why do you not desire the same with Hermacintha? Do you esteem me less than her? Believe me, cousin, that proud as I am to be her work, I yield to her in every thing except on one point, in respect of which I am sure that I shall be her equal always.

It is in your power to torment yourself still.—I have but one course to take.—You doubtlessly guess it; it is that of separating myself from a beloved spot, from this paternal asylum, in a word, from Hermacintha. Ah! Julius, is it from you that I should learn that the place of my birth is not a safe asylum for me, that it is not a true brother I

possess in you, that I have had the misfortune to be born an orphan !—

If you knew all the affliction you bring upon my mind, you would desist from this conduct. Become yourself again. Learn to bear the idea of our eternal separation, if you wish that we should remain together ; if not, I shall go. I am sure of myself, Julius ; nothing can make me change. What is death but a momentary pang ?

LETTER LXIX.

From Julius to Adolphus.

Adolphus ! Adolphus ! who would have said it ? Maria loves me no more ! —No, I cannot doubt it. Read her reply. You see how she speaks of an unworthy husband who outrages her incessantly, who deserves the hatred and contempt

of every honest man. What would she not have said, if the Duke had been really amiable, full of regard and attentions, such as he showed himself formerly? She would have adored him, Adolphus! and thus am I reduced to despair. I know that I also have broken our early vows; that an unholy one has seduced me; but, because I am less worthy of her first esteem, and become an unfaithful lover, must she cease to be that Maria, pure as virtue, amiable as innocence and the Graces; that timid dove, which lived and breathed only for me? If you knew, too, all the while, what I have discovered, what she suffers! what an unworthy husband she has! O Adolphus! Adolphus! what things I have learned! How are they to be justified? How is my sister to be justified? Inconceivable beings! the less I comprehend you, the more I am attached to you!

Returned wholly to reason, stifling

my sentiments, or hiding them with care, I have succeeded in reassuming the tone and habitudes which were agreeable to the ladies. I see Maria without betraying too much emotion, or too much eagerness; I endure even the sight and the caresses of her child. If I dare sometimes suffer to escape me a look ill-restrained, an equivocal expression, a sigh till then hardly suppressed, I see Maria cast on me a look of thunder, crimson covers my cheeks, and I withdraw into myself. I employ myself all the morning, and am become accustomed to my situation. Though her image never leaves me, I can occupy myself till the hour when I am permitted to see her; and it is then, my friend, that I begin to live.

Yesterday, we walked in a solitary alley, which I have named the Alley of Despair. It extends till the eye loses itself in a deep vale, it runs between

with trees of extraordinary size and age, and has neither fruits nor flowers. When, after a long walk, you think to reach the end, you find yourself where you set out, for it returns insensibly into itself. In seeing myself again in this place, I shuddered involuntarily, and the ladies perceived it. It was there, Adolphus, that I passed twenty-four hours together, after receiving your letter and the answer of Maria. I meditated on my situation. I abandoned myself without constraint to all the grief of my feelings. I fixed the plan which it became me to follow; I sacrificed my sentiments to my duty. The trees bore the traces of my visit; several displayed the initials of Maria, and many other inscriptions.

Maria remarked, without emotion, these traces of a sincere, and formerly legitimate passion; but when we came to the first inscription, she observed, laughing, that the subject was a play upon

words, and showed more of conceit than judgment. This is what she read :—

Il est de peines veritables,
Dont rien ne peut nous consoler!
Il est de pleurs insupportables,
Qui brulent sans pouvoir consoler!*

"Let us leave this alley," said she to Hermacintha. She had finished these words when she perceived her infant, which was brought to her, and which spread out its little arms. What painful sensations I experienced, Adolphus! What warmth and tenderness in her caresses. She embraced it, and pressed it to her bosom. "Dear child," said she, "you stand in the place of all to me! I am your Hermacintha, and you will love me as Maria loves her mother. You love him too, cousin," said she, addressing herself to me; "he owes his

* "There are unfeigned sorrows which admit of no consolation; and insupportable tears, which scald the cheeks, and cannot be wiped away."

life to you." I kissed its little hand, and the innocent creature, astonished at this cool caress, smiled on me, and agitated itself to express something. It seemed to me as if it would have said, "Won't you love me? It is not my fault that I am not your son; and I am Maria's."

As we left the alley, Maria withdrew, to go to her apartment. In parting with us, the infant cried, and held out to me its little arms. His mother drew near to me, and the child saluted me with the name of "papa." Maria blushed at this unexpected circumstance, and taking out of the nurse's bag a sweet-meat-box, on which was a portrait of the Duke, gave it to the infant, repeating to it several times, "See, here, papa; this papa." How shall I express to you, my friend, what I felt? Filled with so many opposite sensations, I was about to retire, and leave my senses at liberty to recover their ordinary state, when

Maria requested me to remain. "I beg your pardon," said she, "for my son; you will experience many other unpolite things from him; but he is such an infant that you will excuse him." She wished to assume a light and cheerful tone in pronouncing these words, but her air was at once so graceful and so sentimental, so amiable and so dignified, that far from giving me confidence, she intimidated and saddened me still more.

On returning from our walk, Hermacintha requested my arm; and while Maria was shut up with her infant, we had a long conversation. She thanked me for the wise course I had taken. "I see yourself in that," said she; "no violence; it is the best way to gain of Maria all she has to give you."—I asked her whether Maria had loved her husband, and whether she loved him still.—"How strange a question! Do you think it possible not to love a husband, whatever wrongs he may commit? Do you think it possible to retain an attach-

ment against duty and conscience, and yet be called Maria?"—"Agreed; but is the heart master of itself, when we love sincerely?"—"That depends upon character. Among women like Maria, reason has so strong an empire, that self-command is easy. I doubt not, that she is, if not entirely changed, at least so much under her own controul, that the effect is the same. Are you ignorant, then, of the prodigious influence, upon a virtuous mind, of the delightful certainty of having done our duty? Brother," added Hermacintha, "the time is past when, alone, I could direct you, and find the means of defending you against all the evils which might overtake you. You are a man, and the difference of our ages is now much diminished. If I could see you more tranquil, I should be in haste to resign into your hands the reins of the family; but Julius, how far off you seem to me, from the goal which you should reach. Do

you recollect that, in default of me, it is in you that Maria ought to find a guide, a protector, and a father?"

"I am going to tell you what will astonish you. Maria was upon the point of separating herself from her husband, separating herself by course of law, in the eyes of the world. The new irregularities of the Duke had given her but too good cause; when, discovering that you retained sentiments for her too tender not to be criminal, she has altered her intention, and is resolved on bringing back her husband to reason. 'How much am I obliged to him,' said she; 'his error awakens me to a fuller sense of my duties; he teaches me what I ought to do. I was going to lose for ever the father of my child; I was going to leave myself without all support, at the moment when every thing will force me, perhaps, to leave you, you, my only stay, you Hermacintha, whom no selfish nor interested senti-

ment has attached to me; you, who, not like him, love me for myself only; you, in a word, to whom my reputation and honour are dearer than life. O Hermacintha! there is a substantial happiness in doing our duty. I feel in my heart a beneficent satisfaction in the hope of seeing the Duke brought back to his duties by my efforts. How many obligations will my son owe me! But,' added she, 'I presume to call upon your brother to remain, to participate, and, in some sort, to contribute to the peace of my house. May my husband learn of him to follow his duties, to struggle with his passions, and to live in a creditable manner.'

"We have received the Duke's reply to her overtures, and we expect him here every moment, not on a visit, but to reside with us. Adelaide and Adolphus are to join us also. In this manner we shall pass the winter; and in the spring, our house being en-

tirely repaired, we may live in it, with all our friends."

What should I add, Adolphus, to all this? She loves her husband; there is no doubt remains of it; and her husband is the most dissolute, the most unworthy of her, which all the world could produce. He is one of those men who live but to sacrifice from moment to moment new victims to their impetuous passions; one of the men who have no heart, notwithstanding their courage. He fights, as he loves, brutally; and, what is extraordinary, in cold blood. His heart is moved neither with good nor evil. Cold and selfish, he imagines that nothing is above him, that nothing ought to be denied him; and if he should take it into his head to sacrifice his family, his children, and all who depend upon him, he would find nothing capable of arresting his arm.

LETTER LXX.

From Adolphus to Julius.

How much, my friend, I am relieved by your last letter! Remain, remain; that will be best.—Hermacintha, the heavenly Hermacintha, knows better than every body else what it is best to do. I greatly deceive myself, or her projects are conformable to my wishes. She will soon, if she has not already, to find you a new Sophia. Why (for now the age of illusion is past) should you not find some charms in life with another than Maria, if that other is almost as engaging as she, and not less virtuous?

How sweet is it, my friend, to be beloved! It is then only that we live, when we see ourselves the object of the attentions, the thoughts, the smile, the

cheerfulness of an estimable being! O Julius, in this consists happiness! For myself, I do not comprehend, in your place, why you cannot be entirely happy in retaining the friendship of Maria, of your sister, and myself; and possessing the heart and all the tenderness of a virtuous female companion. I hope to see you happy, employed in repairing all the errors of the past, loss of time, &c.: &c.

Remember, my friend, your great work on Happiness. When shall we see the model of that fireside, that domestic happiness, which you have promised so long. Whatever troubles, whatever misfortunes, whatever privations I may be called upon to endure, say you, let Maria live, let her be always virtuous, let her be always herself, and nothing, Adolphus, nothing can prevent me from being happy. Yet, you are not so, though Maria is still the same, and still virtuous.

Julius, no phrenzy! Practice what

you have so often preached. "Will your head be always in ebullition?" hast thou said to me: "when will your understanding be entirely calm?"—I repeat this in my turn, my dear friend; no phrenzy; no more romance; see life as it is. I have heard you say, that romance is only a false image of truth. Why, then, do you persist in seeking your happiness in that which belongs only to another? Reduce things to their just value. Content yourself with the true friendship of a virtuous and affectionate married woman, and the inexhaustible delights which your family connection may afford you. How many, as good as you, how many, who are perhaps better than you, would be at the height of their hopes, if they possessed but a part of what you possess? Hermacintha, Maria, and that virtuous wife whom you are so worthy of obtaining, are real treasures! Can you misunderstand them?—But I finish; thy sister

and Maria will be more eloquent than I. My friendship aspires only to second their intentions and prayers.

LETTER LXXI.

From Julius to Adolphus.

Every thing fails me at once. It seems, that the more moderate my desires, the less they are granted.

The Duke has been here for some days. He pays great attention to his wife, and walks with her. The day before yesterday in the evening, we all walked, and Hermacintha took my arm. She manifested a solicitude for me, and charming desire to please; never did the piquant originally of my amiable sister strike me more; but I was not deceived as to her true motive, which was to leave Maria and the Duke at liberty to

converse together on one side of the park. Hermacintha endeavoured to divert me from the sensations which such a tête-à-tête inspired. On their return, the conversation became general The Duke proposed that we should skate. Maria hates that chill amusement; and Hermacintha preferred to be a spectator. We descended to the bottom of the bank, and the ladies seated themselves in the little pavilion which you recollect, warmly covered with pelisses. Our good prelate, and the pastor of the village, a well-informed and amiable man, and Mademoiselle de Melrode, accompanied us. The Duke, myself, and Tolmer, whose reputation in this species of exercise is long established, ventured to the side of the Lec. The river had been frozen over for several days past, and there was no probability of danger, since we knew that at Rotterdam they had lighted great fires on the Meuse, and commenced establishments of sports and pleasure; an occurrence

which announced a continuance of rigorous weather.

The ladies had forbidden us to cross the river, but we paid no attention to this, and all the three performed a race before them. I was the last at the first and third heats; but at the second and fourth, when we were to come under the eyes of Maria, involuntarily, and without design on my part, I was the first, and much a-head of the others. The last time, I nearly reached the feet of Maria, who, far from congratulating me as she had done the first, rose, and looked at me with a terrified air, aking me where was the Duke? I turned round, but could not see him. Tolmer, who had stopped, made signs to me. I returned to him, and we went together in search of Maria's husband. We presently found him. An enormous flake of ice, round which I had observed crevices, had detached itself, while he was upon it. When the Duke saw himself carried

down the stream, he attempted to follow us by crossing the crevice; the edges yielded, and, the two parts tending to join and close themselves, by a movement almost imperceptible, but with prodigious force, on account of the enormous mass of the floating ice, he was upon the point of perishing. I flew to his assistance. Tolmer endeavoured to stop me, assuring me, that he had no escape, and that we should both perish together. He held me strongly by my coat. I left it in his hands, and, seeing, though at a great distance, the ladies and the pastors coming toward us on the ice, I threw myself into the water near the Duke, who was struggling with all his strength, and with a presence of mind and coolness not to be conceived.

Fortunately, we still felt flakes of ice under our feet, at no great depth, but they seemed every moment to be leaving us. We were obliged to swim with our feet to keep us up; and the broken

ice, which was in the water, cut us severely. A miracle alone could save us; we were so shut in between the fields of ice, that very soon we should have been cut in two. A little higher, the space was greater and wider. There we should have been able to save ourselves easily; but, where we were, we were about to be strangled. I made the remark hastily to the Duke, and advised him to dive. You know that I am accustomed to wear a girdle. I gave one end of it to him, and diving myself first, I thought myself instantly mortally wounded; for I struck against a little flake of ice. Luckily, there was water enough to bear me, and feeling it boiling a little higher above my head, I made an effort, and, succeeding in regaining the light, at the beginning of the larger crevice which I had remarked, I laid hold strongly on the edge, and now I heard the noise of my companion's efforts. It ceased for a second, but afterward I felt

him pull my girdle. I answered this signal, and both of us got again upon the surface of the ice, exhausted with fatigue, and covered with wounds, while Tolmer was consuming himself in useless efforts, not far from our first situation. He was about to plunge into the water, and was filling the air with his cries for assistance, when I called to him, and with great difficulty made him know that we were safe.

We saw now, that the ladies had much trouble in walking on the ice, notwithstanding the assistance of the two pastors, and of Mademoiselle de Melrode. The latter, used to the glaciers of Switzerland, was not surprised at what she saw. We all three stood up, and thus made them comprehend that nothing fatal had happened to us; and we sent Tolmer to induce them to return, in order that they might not discover the danger we had been in, of which a sight of the condition of our clothes would have suf-

ficiently convinced them. He led them back, and, putting ourselves in the best order we could, and making an excuse of the wetness of our dress, we passed the ladies running, and went into the château, to dress our wounds, and put on fresh garments. When they came in, we related the affair as a very simple accident, not at all dangerous, and which ought not to have given them any alarm, and they suspected nothing further.

At eleven o'clock we separated. I know that Maria and her husband had separate apartments; yet that moment is so painful to me, I feel my heart so cruelly wrung, when I see them withdraw together, that often I prefer to pass the evening alone, under different pretexts, rather than expose myself to this terrible trial. Not only they withdrew together, but Maria had made her husband the sole object of her attention all this evening. She never took her eyes from him, and her eye-lids seemed wet. The

Duke, sensible of this mark of concern, returned her attention, and kissed her hands with a warmth which almost made me repent having saved him from death a few hours before. They are soon going to be together, thought I, mournfully; their infant alone, perhaps, will separate them. I could not support this idea, and I made my escape, to pass the cruellest and most miserable of nights.

Yes, Adolphus, my love is what it formerly was. In vain I try to restrain it; in vain my sister and my reason tell me that there is no hope for me; can I forget that she was destined for me; that I have always loved her? Yes, my friend, always!

The next day, I was in the most painful situation of mind, when Hermacintha came to me. She felicitated me on my generosity and courage. Tolmer had informed her, and Maria had learned every thing from her husband. " Do they

love each other?" said I to my sister.— "Be a man! There is no hope for you. How is it that I have so much trouble in making you understand both your situations?"—"Both;" I remarked this word with emotion. "Neither does she believe it, then?" said I. Hermacintha released me from my error. "What I would say, is," added she, "both are without hope. Be informed, then, for your entire conviction, and to lay to rest your too busy imagination, be informed, that even if a misfortune, like that the Duke escaped yesterday, were to happen, were to restore her to liberty, she would be never your's. Never! Maria has confided to me, that she has made a solemn vow of this, and that she continually renews it. She has thought it necessary, in order to strengthen her in the path of duty, in order to be certain that your return, your presence, and the misconduct of the Duke, should never hurry her into

criminal dispositions. Maria will never be your's; for your love can never more be sufficiently innocent for her."

Behold, then, my friend, my fate decided. I did not know it, when I saved Maria's husband; and if I had had no more hope then, than at this instant, that would not have increased my zeal to serve him. The movement natural to an honest man was enough; and, further, I saw Maria coming toward us; I saw her uneasy and alarmed, and almost demanding from me an account of her husband. "He whose name she bears ought not to perish in my sight," said I; and this ardent conviction caused his safety.

O my friend, it is finished with me. I feel it, since my sister, far from aiding me, opposes openly, and still more in secret, the remains of attachment which she might still preserve for me. Mademoiselle and herself do not conceal this.

It must be, then, that it would be criminal. I will do my utmost, since it must be so, to forget it; but how is it to be done? I know that Hermacintha and you are in the right; the only thing which I desire absolutely is, the certitude that Maria does not love the Duke. Too often I am convinced of the contrary. Oh! what influence upon a virtuous mind have not these sacred bonds of religion! A simple *yes*, a benediction, a short ceremony, are capable, then, of indissolubly attaching to each other two separate and dissimilar creatures for ever! Doubtlessly, there is something mysterious and impenetrable in the eyes of a virtuous wife, in the acts of the ministers of the altar, which has not discovered itself to my profane understanding! It is true, that I have never known any other than the heartless and deceitful oaths of a perjured woman, and that there belonged to my connection with her nothing which related

either to happiness nor to the entire duration of my life.—I conceive the self-collection, the seriousness of mind, the inward struggles of a woman, altogether different—of Maria, when she gave her hand to the Duke. Mademoiselle de Melrode has told me every thing in detail. Nothing is more touching to a third person, nay, even for the ear of a stranger, than the recital of all which took place then. I see her on her knees, embracing those of her husband, conjuring him to spare her still, and long obtaining from him a conduct and forbearance incredible. At present, she is changed. She loves me as a brother. If she were free, she would not have me for a husband; thus has said my sister. She would fear to lose, in me, the brother of whom she has need! Pretext of inconstancy! Women love as brothers those whom they no longer love at all.

LETTER LXXII.

From Julius to Adolphus.

HEAR strange news! Ernest, the Duke's friend, lives a few leagues from us, half way to Brussels. Maria's husband has been to see him, and is come back completely taken with Ernest's wife. You know who she is; you know but too well Corinna, the celebrated and too-celebrated Corinna. Ernest knows all the blackness of her conduct, and yet has married her—and yet has adopted all her children. To the shame of her sex, Corinna has never blushed to show herself in public, pregnant, though not married, and to change her lovers like her guests.* It is thus that she saw herself

* It will be remembered, that the author, a little before, has gravely represented this and similar pictures, as consistent with the manners of society

surrounded with a number of children at the time Ernest gave her his name and his hand. Nevertheless, Ernest knows all this sort of women. Several, instead of deceiving him, have been his dupes. What use has he made of so much experience, address, and knowledge of the world? To be, at last, more than any other, the victim of the most artful and most debased of courtisans! Though she is still very beautiful, she is much changed. The addition of a few years has taken from the lightness of her figure, and enlarged her soft and delicate features, of which the expression was always a contrast to her mind.

I have myself also been at Val, the name of Ernest's place. I learned from him, to whom I owe nothing but praises

among the great *in Poland*. On one occasion, in the first edition of this book, the author has said, "To have an idea of these odious transactions, we must remember the manners of the country." TR.

for his conduct in Poland, the particulars of which I was ignorant of the Duke's latter extravagances at Paris. I have recommended to him to be silent to Hermacintha and Maria. They know enough to be well acquainted with his conduct, and to know more would only give them useless pain. Maria has declared, that whatever should be the faults and wrongs of her husband, she could never cease to be his wife. I have never seen so decided a hatred as that of Maria's to divorce. That single reason, she has said, suffices to make her hold Poland in aversion.*

Corinna has not attempted to visit our ladies, one circumstance which delights me. Assuredly, Hermacintha would but have ill received her. She detests and despises her to the last degree. A singular effect of the Duke's recon-

* "Divorce, in Poland," says the author, in the first edition, "is a thing common, legal, and tolerated to excess." Tr.

noitring is, that Hermacintha flatters herself with a great change in him. He draws such moving pictures of the virtue, good conduct, and sprightliness of mind of Corinna, of Ernest's happiness with her, and of all that belongs to him, that he is resolved on visiting him, and becoming a prudent man, and a good and happy husband. I alone have my doubts of this metamorphosis. I guess the secret. The Duke is violently in love with Corinna. He believes her virtuous, a good wife, &c. and believes that Ernest is happy. You have told me yourself, that the artful courtisan practised the same illusions upon you. These dazzle him at present; but, being founded on the most sensual love, they will not last long.

Ernest has given me a particular account of the Duke. He has reached a degree of blindness which has no equal. He bears an honourable name, and certainly possesses capacity, information,

and courage; and yet he has committed himself latterly in a manner so extraordinary, that all Paris has talked, and still talks, of nothing but his follies.

You know that he has a charming sister, a model of the graces, the virtues, and candour, lately returned from the provinces, where, notwithstanding the troubles, the nuns of her aunt's abbey have completed her education. Well! he has obliged this sister to join the company of the lost women whom he frequents and receives. Before his quitting Paris, he honoured a pretty actress with a brilliant fête. Every body was there: amusement, at Paris, is an important concern. But, at supper, he placed the actress between himself and his sister. All the females chose another table; and this young and charming girl saw herself surrounded with only what the assembly contained of women and girls of blemished reputation.—Another time, he was surprised

outside the stage-door at the theatre, waiting for his Dulcinea, who, during the time, was changing her dress in the green-room, before her fellow-actors, who treated her less respectfully than the Duke, and took the brutal liberties too frequent among them in Paris, to be the subject of remark. The Duke stood sentry a long time, and the lady boasted of the trick before many persons. An hour after the play, he was still at his post. The individual who observed him, saw him afterward receive the hand of the beauty, carry her ridicule, and accompany her across the Boulevards. His carriage and livery brought him away from her house the next day, at noon. Ought there to be no punishment for such an excess of impudence? I love people to be open, even in their faults; but a scandal like this ought to be criminal in the eyes of the law.

LETTER LXXIII.

From the same to the same.

WHAT a metamorphosis, my friend! The Duke is become steady, domestic, and gentle. He is eager in his attentions to his wife, and talks of the bonds of marriage with respect. In a word, he employs himself in regaining the good graces of Maria, who is proud to see him return to his duty. Hermacintha, especially, applauds herself for the success of her efforts, and I know that she has spared nothing for such a result. As for me, it is not his change which alarms me, but only the elevation, the vows, and the firmness of Maria. Though she should be separated from her husband, though her marriage were dissolved, she would never marry again; I know her but too well.

The Duke will use little delay in resuming his accustomed course of life, whatever the world may say to the contrary.

I avow, that there is nothing false in the Duke's conduct; but the truth is, he has less love for his wife, than for Corinna. It is her whom he seeks to gain by his metamorphosis. He talks of her incessantly, goes often to Ernest's, and sometimes passes the night there. When he returns, his enthusiasm for Corinna is redoubled, and, in the same proportion, his love of the domestic virtues. Hermacintha and Maria indulge an idle hope. I am sure that he cannot change his characters, and that his efforts will be of little duration. There is always, in all things, a true, essential, and fundamental basis. If our resolutions are built upon this, we have no reason to fear that they will change; but when they spring from a false principle, we may be sure, that sooner or

later, they will be broken. It was thus, my friend, that I predicted your brother-in-law would marry again, in spite of his grief and declarations, upon the death of his amiable wife. I predicted this, because he did not assign for his resolution that motive which alone appears to me to be capable of preventing a second marriage, the not giving a step-mother to his children. I was right, as you know, and I shall be right also, as to the Duke. If he could really change, he would now be in a state of profound regret and humiliation; he would discover his errors and misdeeds, and repentance would entirely mortify them. Instead of this, he betrays *only a change of resolution.* He is so correct in his morals, that he cannot discover his brutishness, and there is nothing to be hoped from him. I am astonished that my sister mistakes him. Her earnest desire of the change, is probably the cause of her blindness. But, tell me.

why wish that Maria and the Duke should love each other? Does it not seem as if Hermacintha took a malignant pleasure in tormenting me, and in nursing desires opposite to mine? Is it not enough that Maria bears the Duke's name, and that he is the father of her child? No; she fears that Maria should have too much affection for me! Ah! formerly, she took a different aim! But let her be satisfied; Maria withdraws herself more and more from me, and soon I shall be an entire stranger. Scarcely does she listen to me, if I timidly make such a remark. Do you know where she flies for refuge? To her husband.

I have complained that we cease to live in the same familiarity as formerly. My complaints have produced quite another effect than that which I expected, and, from day to day, there establishes itself between Maria and myself an increased reserve. I suffer, and am

silent; I fear that she will finish, by refusing to see me, and by hating me. I know what she hopes for. She thinks that her husband, returned to virtue and his duties, will owe to herself only this reform; and she persuades herself, that becoming better and better every day, he will at length offer her a heart such as she formerly believed mine. I say formerly; for it is but too visible she no longer thinks the same of it.

Tell me, Adolphus, what she will do, if this does not take place; if, undeceived by illusions, she sees the Duke, more perverted than ever, escape her? I am not vengeful, but yet I wish with all my heart, that if this must take place, I may be a witness of it, and die afterward, not with pleasure—my heart never found it, nor ever will find it, in the pain of another!—but with the assurance that she is convinced, that none else could offer her a devotion, an affection, and a love, like those which I

entertain for her! There is nothing which my sister and she do not attempt, to establish the reputation of the Duke. When visitors are present, their looks, respect, and affection for that happy mortal, are extraordinary. If in conversation, any expression, observation, or maxim, is uttered, which is capable of being applied to the Duke, you should see how well these ladies understand how to turn it from him, to defend him, to cite other maxims to the purpose, and always to come off victoriously! All, even the mind and acquirements which they display with so much grace, and so many charms, all is exclusively consecrated to him! There are people born under a lucky star; the more they deserve and seek for misfortune, the better every thing succeeds with them!

Notwithstanding the length of my complaints, I am still to describe the manner the Duke and myself live together. Before the event of the ice, we were

more reserved toward each other. Since that, he is more attentive; but he has always behaved to me with a noble and uniform frankness. This man does a great injury to good morals, I confess. If he were more the friend of these, society would have reason to congratulate itself on possessing him; for, morals out of the question, he would be perfect. But for his ungovernable passion for false pleasures, he would be cited as a model. He knows that I have had tender sentiments for his wife; this is his expression. He believes that they last no longer. He cannot imagine, I believe, that any man can love longer than a few months, and especially when he has no hope. I ought to render him the justice which is his due. He makes profession of great respect for Maria. She strikes him as so superior, that he cannot prevent himself from adopting her opinions, in spite of himself. But, if he some-

times professes them, he is very far from following them. I confess that his veneration for the best of women has imposed a silence upon the evil sentiments which had taken birth in my bosom.

Since the danger he ran, whether the peril which we surmounted was really as great as it was extraordinary, or whether we reciprocally aided each other, and are mutually bound in gratitude, there has grown between us, and perhaps in spite of us, a sort of familiarity; and it seems to me as if we had known one another from our infancy.

When his wife is with us, he is engrossed with her, and forgets that I am there, more, perhaps, than he ought. Maria never makes him remember it; and this is she who does not suffer the escape of the least smile which is not exactly as it should be, if any one, beside her husband, indulges in it! But, for his part, if he is under restraint at any

time, it is only through my sister, whose air, manners, port, and especially her looks, so implicitly obey her.

If the conversation turns upon his conduct, happiness, or love, the Duke always seems to have changed his conduct and principles; but it is only necessary to animate the discourse a little, and take him in reverse, that is, badly support the opinion which I know to be really his, to see him speedily grow warm, take up with eagerness the cause which I have sustained as a very bad advocate, and then display his real sentiments; though he is often drawn in a contrary direction by the truth, gentleness, and force of the virtue of Maria. He never avows his opinions boldly, but dissimulates. When he is closely driven, he persuades his antagonist that he is convinced. Sometimes I am caught; but it is very easy to see, from the turn which he gives to the ideas of the world, to those which he calls the ideas of the

generality, that they are also his own. His favourite maxim is that of Corinna—*short and sweet.* All the pleasures which the world offers us, we should seize, says he, often. Let us gather together the whole; the result will not be much; and if they are so unimportant, so trivial, why, say the men of the world, (it is the Duke who speaks) why attach so much importance to flying from them? It is sufficient to be honest and good; for the rest, their maxim is, to amuse ourselves as much as possible, and as long as we can.

The ladies cannot possibly convince him to the contrary, because he is always in haste to yield the point. Cold, of an indolent mind, and extremely polite in his demeanour to me, he takes the trouble to discuss nothing, unless when I can succeed in goading him sharply, and forcing it from, if I may say so; but this happens rarely. It is a sort of surprise against which he is often upon his

guard, and to accomplish which I am obliged to wait for my occasion, and the concurrence of several favourable circumstances.

One thing which sufficiently shows, not his character, but his principles, is, that he has had the project of making his court to Hermacintha. You will readily excuse me from explaining what this phrase, *making his court*, signifies in his mouth. Formerly, in my absence, you have been acquainted with his language. Hermacintha is engaging, and, in spite of her coldness and insensibility, no woman, after Maria, possesses, in her attitudes, gesture, manner, or voice, a grace so charming. I see it, I, who am her brother, and the lover of Maria; and how much, therefore, may it not be visible to others? What surprises me is, that a profane admirer, like the Duke, should have felt any attraction in what the earth contains of

the purest, and the most opposite to his own character.

He explained himself slightly before Hermacintha; she appeared to take no notice, and this emboldened him. He found an opportunity of speaking to my sister alone, and forgot himself so far as to make her a declaration at which she was much astonished. She stopped, called Maria and Mademoiselle de Melrode, and began by laughing, and turning the Duke's conduct into ridicule. Then, addressing herself to Maria, she grew warmer, and painted all the blackness of her husband with such force and success, that both were profoundly moved. The Duke even blushed, stammered, and attempted to justify himself, but could not succeed, and left the company, without daring to lift his eyes upon her whose look and understanding had shot a thunderbolt upon his mind. It was on leaving this scene, that he formed

the plan which would have finished with the misfortune of Martha, if he had not been frustrated almost at the moment of her destruction.

We shall see what this second change will produce. The ladies promise themselves much, and neglect nothing to succeed. Let us wait it. One thing which surprizes me is, the different effects which the same conduct of the Duke produces. Hermacintha is joyous and exulting; and Maria, though making all her efforts to lead back her husband, seems the more melancholy for the success of her efforts.

O my friend, you have good reason to say, that if Maria loved me still, I should be less unhappy. I shall never be happy, I say to myself; but, in fact, my happiness is there; it exists, and I am only separated from it.

LETTER LXXIV.

From the same to the same.

The Duke has scarcely left me time to be a prophet, but has just signalized himself in a manner worthy of him. Farewell the fine projects of my sister! For this time, I thoroughly trust that all is at an end:

Chassez le naturel, et il revient au galop.

The Duke persevered in his resolution to become steady and wise. For some weeks there had been no scandalous adventures, and no complaints. He continued to go frequently, notwithstanding the season of the year, to Ernest's château, and often stayed all night there. Last Saturday, he told his friend that he was come to stay several days with him. Ernest made him welcome, and took

pains to render his house agreeable. The handsome husband of Corinna is something of a fool, and has a few other little faults beside ; but all are made up for by an unsuspicious and open character, and a generosity truly French. He suffered himself to be deceived on this occasion, and rushed violently upon the Duke, sword in hand. Though he was furious and armed, the other received him coolly, and, without discomposing himself, said, " I confess that this affair is worthy a thrust of the sword, and even the life of one of us ; but not an assassination. I am without arms, and in your house : a moment's reflection." Ernest, checking his fury, reflected, stopped a moment, and broke his sword, which he threw with violence from the window. " Within an hour, at the latest," said he, " I shall expect you, base seducer !" —" Yes," said the Duke, tranquilly, again, " before that time, I shall be at the pheasantry ; but I do not deserve the

first apellative, and I should not deserve the second, except in regard to quite another woman than Corinna."—"Begone, begone," replied Ernest. The Duke tranquilly and slowly obeyed, and, would it be believed?—Corinna followed him, taking his arm! In the result, Ernest received a serious wound, and the Duke a scratch, notwithstanding the violence and the skill of Ernest. Corinna has set off with Maria's husband, leaving her own almost dying. They are gone toward Paris. The Duke has written to his wife, "A disagreeable accident forces me to go to Paris. Melrode will oblige me by not writing, as I must remain some time concealed."

LETTER LXXVIII.

From Adolphus to Julius.

My Adelaide has suffered much; but, at length, we are safe, and she has given me a son. You know his name, my friend; it is Julius. He resembled me, from the first moment, in the most striking manner. My happiness is at its height; can I do too much to deserve it? Adelaide still suffers much. She does not feel, as before, that expressive joy which rendered her so divine. Whether her sufferings have been too violent, or she is more feeble, her pleasure is silent. She calls me to her, presses my hand, and keeps me as long as she can. I cover her hands with kisses. How worthy of regard does a woman, in this state, appear, in the eyes of a happy hus-

band! When I enter her bed-chamber, I seem to be in the asylum of virtue, peace, and innocence, and, even in the dwelling of the gods. Adieu, my friend, adieu; I feel that I am wrong to be so long away from her. I return to the side of her bed. I am sure that her hand is already seeking mine.

LETTER LXXIX.

From Julius to Adolphus.

WHO would have said it? Maria is become, in consequence of the late extravagance of the Duke, more reserved and indifferent than before. Happy Hermacintha engrosses all her kindnesses.

I find that Maria is acquainted with the whole follies of her husband. Mademoiselle de Melrode was obliged to relate them, because she was determined

to follow him, and go to Paris. Since she has known every thing, she has desisted. She has decided on her course, she says, and irrevocably; but I know not yet what it is. I shudder at the idea that she means to leave us; and where would she go, with such a husband, and without her family? Cruel society! cruel and barbarous constraints! would you prevent me from following her, from watching over her, and serving her whom I love disinterestedly and without the film of passion? She is my relation, my sister, and almost my ward. Are we, then, too happy? do we live too long, that so much care should be used to place us under restrictions, and take from us the little liberty which we have left? But, will they say, these laws are for our great happiness. Let them prove it, then, for once; and not let experience continually show the falsehood of the system!

She often shuts herself up alone;

scarcely looks at me, and thanks with a great deal too much politeness. Sometimes, I could be tempted to believe, that she thinks me the cause of all her afflictions. Yesterday, I was guilty, through want of recollection, of speaking ill of libertines, of those who are called young men of fashion. Maria looked at me with a severe air, and pronounced these few words: "While they are not destitute of heart and principle, they may yet return to virtue; and therefore they have the more need of the regards of their friends." I said nothing; the words made too deep an impression upon me. I think, however, when she thus expressed herself, Mademoiselle had not entirely unveiled the life and character of the Duke. Perhaps she has changed since. Meantime, she is more melancholy, and more severe with me, than yesterday; and it is always thus.

LETTER LXXX.

From the same to the same.

Hear me, my friend! I am losing Maria, I am losing her for ever! She is resolved on leaving us all, even Hermacintha herself; and at what a moment! If you knew!—when her mind is laid open to me—But why anticipate my recital? Hear me.

Yesterday, the ladies sent for me. I went into my sister's apartment. I found her deeply moved, and Mademoiselle de Melrode likewise. Maria alone appeared less melancholy, and she was caressing her infant, without impatience of its cries.

"Cousin," said she, "I have sent for you to receive my farewell. Perhaps my absence will be somewhat long."

"You are going suddenly, without letting us know your motives?"

"Since you wish for explanation, I do not hesitate to inform you, that par-

ticular reasons, the secret of which you will not inquire into, oblige me to go."

"Where are you going,?" said I.

"That also is a secret," resumed she, forcing a smile; "but let your friendship for me be at ease upon it. Hermacintha knows the road I am taking, and my destination."

"Ah! Maria, Maria, I discover it; Your unworthy husband gives you new griefs"—said I, with an air certainly too eager and indignant.

Maria coloured, rose, and, assuming a cold and serious tone, such as I had never seen in her before, "Sir," said she, drily, "while I impute no misconduct to my husband, no other person has a right to reproach him with any. He is the father of my child, I bear his name, and he cannot be offended without doubly offending me. This injury, which you gratuitously inflict upon your cousin, you, who, after her husband, ought to be her natural defender, shall

be the last. The second shall not behold you in my presence."

She was about to leave the room. Hermacintha succeeded in prevailing on her to stay, and obtaining pardon for my presumption, which I promised not to repeat. My sister and I employed, by turns, what arguments our logic could furnish, for combating her's. Carried away a second time by the violence of my feelings, and the afflicting idea of again losing the society of Maria, I spoke with warmth; my heart suffered its sorrows to escape itself, and betrayed, perhaps, too ardent an attachment.

"I will listen no longer to that tone," said Maria, coldly. "Speak to your cousin as a brother; show her motives which may convince her. No lamentation nor sentiments; they prove only the want of good arguments. But spare yourself any thing more. If I had no regrets to struggle with, cousin, in leaving you, must I not have the most distracting thoughts in leaving her who

has been my mother, my sister, my friend; she who has possessed, and will always possess, all my affections, friendship, admiration, esteem, respect, and gratitude? O Hermacintha! there is nothing belonging to these sentiments which I do not feel for you!"

I complained, then, not of her coldness, but of her change of heart: "Alas! cousin, you have just acknowledged, and demonstrated to me, that you love me no more."—I was not satisfied with her reply; she defended herself badly. Neither was I pleased with my sister. She spoke to her with more resignation, and less force, than ever. She was convinced by Maria's reasonings. Maria withdrew, embracing her son. Hermacintha accompanied her, and begged me to wait for her.

On her return, Hermacintha completed my astonishment, by informing me, that Maria complained exceedingly, that I had several times attempted to see her when Hermacintha or Made-

moiselle de Melrode were with her. "She forbids you to do so," said Hermacintha; "and if you repeat your efforts, you will hasten her departure."

"But where is she going? If it is not to her husband, where can she find a better asylum? Talk to her, sister; I offer never to see her more. Let her not prepare herself new troubles, by quitting the paternal roof, the house which she was born."

"It is a secret," said Hermacintha. "If it were my own, my brother should have known it long ago; another's is inviolable."

All the rest of the day, Maria was not, as usual, visible. I saw her servants more sad and more busy than ever. I thought them making preparations for her departure. Little capable of enduring this cruel idea, I went to her apartment, but found it impossible to enter it. I did not leave the gallery which led to it. Several hours elapsed without any

thing occurring. At length, the door was opened for her child, who was taken into the garden. I entered the apartment, but I know not what sudden fear stopped me at the door of her chamber. Her women held me, with mildness and sorrow, that I should greatly distress her, if I were to surprize her and see her in the state in which she was, and therefore I did not dare to persist. I walked through the other parts of the house; but, in spite of myself, my feet always brought me back to the entrance of this sanctuary of affliction and virtue.

Above Maria's chamber, there is a little window, very elevated. You recollect that we do not inhabit the Hermitage, but an old château which had been long disused, and is very irregularly built. I left the apartment, and, ascending the staircase which leads to an upper uninhabited story, I found myself at the height of the old window, near which I seated myself. The staircase is

dark. I stopped a sort of loop-hole, which let in some light, and contemplated, from my seat, the figure and actions of my cousin. Soon after, the doors of the house were shut. At first, I could only distinguish badly; but, when night came, the room was lighted, and I could see Maria's features, completely dejected, and pale, but preserving all their purity and delicacy. Her eyes, and especially her divine look, had lost nothing of their lustre.

I perceived preparations had been making for her departure. She undressed her child, played with him, and, in amusing him, finished by sending him to sleep. When he was laid in his pretty cradle, she contemplated him with an air of calmness and satisfaction which inflicted a wound on me, I confess. Afterward, she kissed him. The child, though asleep, answered with a smile; he dreamed, assuredly, that his mother caressed him, and he was not deceived. Then, by a little graceful movement, he

stretched out his arm, and doubled his hand under his cheek. It served for a support to his head, which he laid toward his mother.

O my friend, what did I become, when, a little after this scene, I beheld another, more moving still? I feared my eyes would fail me. Concentered in the act of vision, I seemed to live only in that. Hermacintha entered. They sat down together.—"Dear Maria, must we, then, part?"—"Yes, cousin, we must; I feel it daily more and more. See, how the character of Julius changes. He dares insult my husband! Whatever he may be to his wife, nobody has a right to insult, in my presence, him whose name I bear. To-morrow, your brother would go further still, if I were to accustom myself not to respect the bonds which unite me to the Duke. Venture, sister, to look at the depth of the abyss into which I should be drawn!"

"I feel that you must separate your-

self from Julius, because the disorderly conduct of the Duke is continually increasing. Honour directs you, dear child, to set up a sort of barrier between your own reputation and that of your husband. It directs you equally, to prove to the Duke, to his family, your own, and, shall I say so? to Julius himself, that it is not to remain in scenes, nor with persons, whom she loves, that Maria lives separate from her husband."

"Yes, equally far from my husband, from you, and from all I love, dear Hermacintha."

"You will not be the greatest sufferer by our separation. Your child will console you; but I shall lose all at once. Nevertheless, I am persuaded, like you, Maria, that in your situation, the most profound retreat, that which is most innocent, and the most out of the reach of calumny, befits you best. Let us acknowledge a just truth, my child: the

misconduct of a husband or a wife, brings, in the eyes of the world, even upon the innocent and suffering party, a share of blemish; and hence you should redouble your care and security. You are right, also, that if I were to go with you, the world would not believe that you had renounced Julius."

"O God!" interrupted Maria, "rather let me die a thousand times, without the farewell of my friends, than suffer it to be thought, that there lies within my bosom the hope of frightful divorce. There is nothing which I am not capable of doing, to keep at a distance even the thought of such an abasement: that alone rallies my strength and courage, and enables me to fill my duties, and to leave you, my dear Hermacintha—to forget my cousin, my friend, him whom I have always regarded as my true brother. If Hermacintha were with me, I should never have the

courage to die to the world. Adieu, then, O my mother! give me your blessing, and let me go." She fell on her knees. My sister threw herself into her arms, dissolved in tears, and blessed her; and, after they had remained some time in each others arms, "Courage!" said Hermacintha; "dry your tears, Maria; let us do our duty!" She wiped away her tears, and separated from her, without speaking more. Maria held her yet. "Maria must only live for him; he must console her for all," said my sister, pointing to the cradle of her child, and restraining, with effort, her own emotion, which her eyes and trembling voice betrayed, in spite of the firmness of her words. A moment more, and Hermacintha would have sunk under the agitation of her senses; she foresaw it, and hastily departed.

Left alone, Maria threw herself upon her knees before her oratory: "Almighty God!" said she, in a low voice,

"behold me an orphan a second time before my death. I come to implore thee before I quit this my paternal dwelling. Vouchsafe to hear the prayer of one who cries to thee out of the depth of sorrow, vouchsafe to support me, and to show me the way which I ought to follow. Grant me the hope of fulfilling thy will, and my soul shall be calmed with thy peace."—Here she began to speak still lower. She continued for some time. I heard only her sighs, imperfectly suppressed. "O God!" said she, at length, and in conclusion, "wilt thou pardon me the unworthy sentiments which still fill my heart? I declare, at least, the purity of my intentions. I loved him, I still love him as a brother. His errors have not changed me, to the great surprize of my mind. I feel that a pure and veritable passion cannot change. If the estimable object of our love ceases to be estimable, it does not remove our love, nor prevent us from being faithful

to one whom we have known worthy of all our affections. At present, resolved to live in a holy place, to retire to the chapter of Helmondt, I ought to banish from my heart and thoughts a dangerous friend. Receive the sacrifice which I make of my affection, of a long moment of errors and evil thoughts. In vain have I armed myself with a false elevation, in vain have I affected a false indifference; my heart has remained the same, to the day when thou inspiredest me with the strength and courage to follow the path of my duties."

Now, rising, she opened a trunk; and took out some letters, a portrait, and some trinkets, which, in the happy days of my infancy, I had given her, and which she had accepted with the same innocence. She threw them into the fire; but, when she saw the portrait half burnt, "O God!" said she, "that is a pang," putting one hand to her heart, while with the other she withdrew

what remained. She saw it half disfigured, and returned it to the flames, crying, "Farewell! farewell!"

I could no longer suppress my agitation; an involuntary movement made me break the glass of the window, which fell into Maria's chamber, and on the cradle, which she defended with her body, asking, at the same time, in a firm voice, "Who is there?" Her servants, attracted by the noise, knocked at the door, and she let them in. I retired in deep emotion and silence, Adolphus, and scarcely able to support myself; and, as I went, I heard direct that the shutters of the old window should be shut, and complain gently of the negligence through which it had not been done before. The servants left her, to obey her, and I withdrew, bidding her, in a low voice, farewell, to which she gave me no answer. I have made useless attempts to renew the conversation with my sister, and I come to you.

my friend, to open my soul, and to confide my sorrows. The day is still distant! with what dread I anticipate it. Maria will leave us, and I know not what will become of us. — But this moment my sister sends for me. I fly to her. Adieu!



LETTER LXXXI.

From Adolphus to Hermacintha.

It is confided to me to inform Maria of very extraordinary news. You certainly do not expect it. — The Duke ——; but has not the colour of my wax told you enough?—The Duke is dead.—

After his return to Paris, with Corinna, he paid no regard to any thing. With an excessive levity and gaiety, he carried his new conquest every where,

displayed an extraordinary splendour, and lost no occasion of amusement.—Suddenly Ernest arrived, almost recovered from his wound, and demanded satisfaction for the elopement of Corinna. They fought, and, this time, the Duke received a serious wound. He had strength enough, however, to fire, not at Ernest, but in the air. Afterward, he threw himself on his antagonist's neck, assuring him, that he would not fire upon him, and that he deserved what he had received, but that he would not leave Corinna.

We thought proper to conceal these particulars from you. He had been restored a month, when we learned that he found himself embarrassed in his affairs. His banker had failed, and this misfortune was attributed to the Duke. Corinna came to Adelaide, though they scarcely knew each other, and represented to her the danger the Duke was in from his numerous creditors. She

painted his situation in a manner so moving, that I promised my wife to carry him, eight-and-forty hours afterward, a great part of what he was in need of. But what was my astonishment, when I went to his house, to render him this service, after having taken a thousand pains, to see myself refused. I learned that he and Corinna were in the best state as to their affairs, and that far from being in want, they had just bought the diamonds of a foreign court, at a very high price. We could comprehend nothing, no more than the public, of the cause of so sudden a change. After his death, we saw that Maria, your divine Maria, had made him a secret sacrifice of all that she privately possessed, though she was not ignorant of the use to which it was to be applied, nor that all the derangement of his fortune proceeded from his extravagance, and Corinna's.

A few days after this, he quarrelled with Corinna; they separated; and Co-

rinna is gone to America, with a rich Spaniard. Yesterday, the Duke sent to me, begging me to go to him immediately. I found him seated in his library, very cheerful and agreeable.

"I only waited for you."

"What to do?" said I.

We sat down. "Sir," replied the Duke, "I am the happiest of men, and yet I am tired. I want to see what they are doing above-stairs.—This world has no pleasure which I have not experienced, and with which I am not disgusted. You should imitate me. Are you not curious to make the journey with me? In a few seconds, we could dive into that secret of the other life which is so carefully concealed from our eyes."

I could not recover from my astonishment at this singular discourse. I thought his mind gone, and he saw into my idea.

"I am quite cool," said he, "I have not lost my senses. Neither despair nor

sorrow determines me to what I have resolved on."

He took out the inclosed letter, stepped back a little, and killed himself with a pistol, with a laugh. When his servants came in at the noise, we tried all that could be done to save him, but it was too late. He had taken his measures decidedly, and there was still a smile upon his lips.

LETTER LXXXII.

From the Duke d'Ast to his Wife.

I SHALL be no more when you receive this letter. A new world will be open before me, and I shall already have appeared in it with confidence. I have no crimes to reproach myself with; but I wish, before executing a project which engages all my thoughts, to make you acquainted with my reasons, and open myself entirely to your inspection.

When I reached the age of youth, I was tender, impassioned, and sentimental; nevertheless, it was long before I attached myself to any woman. I was too difficult; I searched for that which did not exist, a perfect woman, a being capable of engaging all my affections. Always ready to deceive myself on this head, I often, very often, believed that I was upon the point of reaching my ideal happiness, that celestial creature whom I desired. But viewed a little nearer, the charm which had ravished me disappeared. No woman sustained a long admiration, and at the moment of finding the chimerical perfection of my imagination, my extreme delicacy, or rather my childishness, made me fly from her.

I lived long in this state of solitude, at once painful and voluntary, and was long doubtful of myself, on the score of sensibility. My parents feared that I should always remain a rebel to love,

and, notwithstanding my tenderness, and my regard for women, I could attach myself to none. As I have already said, none appeared worthy of my heart. It was thus that I long received and deserved, as Adolphus remembers, the name of *the little Charles the Twelfth.* Meantime, my temperament and character developing itself as I grew up, the fire which was smoking in my heart caught flame by chance. A charming mistress, of more years than myself, became my pride at my entrance into life, and showed me the real road. I was loving her with all my soul, when she left me for a new course of adventures. I followed her example. I learned that happiness consists in pleasure, and pleasure in novelty and change; and, till the epoch of the Revolution, my life was of the happiest. Every day, I gathered fresh flowers, and it seemed as if beauty only showed itself for me. It is true, that endowed with the most superior

external gifts, possessed of an inexhaustible gaiety, and with talents and acquirements for which I was incessantly praised, few, very few, of our young men could be compared with me.

At the epoch of the troubles, I was assailed in the only persons whom I loved with an entire devotion and esteem —my parents. They were the first victims of these events. This first and serious misfortune of my life changed my character. I became cold, and almost insensible to every thing; but I saw you, and your charms restored me to life. I had the happiness to be of use to you, and you know all that passed till our marriage.

From that time, I was truly in love, and irresistibly taken with Maria. I thought it would never have ended; and if I had not possessed you, I know not whether I should have survived my passion. The first weeks of our real marriage, I was the happiest of men. Your attractions, Maria, are above all praise,

and all parallel. Nevertheless, must I confess it to you, since it is the truth, acquaintance made me discover, not defects, but that the bloom of so many was gone.

I searched elsewhere for what I still cannot prevent myself from cherishing, the first dawn of beauty. Your gentleness, your unalterable constancy, wrought no change in me. It was now that Martha, young and innocent, and fresh as you had been, presented herself. My head was inflamed, and I resolved to have her. The strange Hermacintha opposed herself to my plan, by taking her away for me. She even forced me, at the same time, to reflect on my system and character. I resolved to change it, and conform myself to yours; but, during the painful efforts which my resolution cost me, I fell in again with Corinna. Chance, and my fiery head, led me to renew my acquaintance with her. I have known many other women. I

cannot conceive life without them, nor without all the pleasures.

It is not through apathy nor indifference that I have left you at a distance from me. I felt that you would be an eternal obstacle, the presence and constraint of which might lead me into bad conduct. As it is, I have enjoyed life better than any one, be he whom he will. I have been acquainted with the prettiest women in the court and city; I have exhausted every pleasure without exception; I have shone in the field, in society, and in office; nothing is wanting, and yet my happiness fatigues me. There are no more women here below for me. As soon as I approach one, a few days only elapse before she fills me with disgust. None bear the test of time; all sink, and none swim again. A few days wear out, in my eyes, the charms which win me at first, and it is impossible for me to recover them. I am so experienced, that intimacy soon leads to the

discovery of imperfections, to satiety and contempt: there is nothing left in love nor life which can yield a charm to me!

Formerly, I loved my parents with an extreme tenderness, and I am astonished now, to feel nothing for my son. I love him, but his birth has added nothing to my happiness.

Sometimes, I have fancied that I saw something extraordinary in you. It has seemed to me, after listening to Hermacintha, that you alone could confer a sort of felicity unknown and mysterious to my apprehension. But I could make nothing of the search; I was never able to find, in the beautiful, the amiable, the charming Maria, any thing but the most attractive of women; and I cannot conceive what your sex can present us with, beyond beauty. Beauty is an illusion, no doubt, and I am no longer a dupe to it.

I have nothing, therefore, better to do, than to set off from this world—and what

should I do in it any longer? In the other life, I shall find, possibly, more real and durable happiness, and, to a certainty, things which I have never seen before.

I ought to confess, Madam, that I should have engaged in this journey long ago, if religion had not detained me till now. But, after mature reflection, I have found no conclusive arguments against my own way of thinking. Heaven wills that we should die, since it has created us mortal. Life is nothing else than the faculty of giving life and death. The latter would only be guilty, in the case of its being exerted against an-another than myself. I have fulfilled my task in serving my country, and in giving life to another. Cato and other illustrious persons have borne sufficient testimony, by their examples, to the existence of the right; and the difference of the motive makes no alteration. I am convinced that those who declare against

suicide, do so only through weakness and cowardice. Can it be denied, that in the ages in which it was tolerated, men had more courage and masculine virtue?

Adieu, Madam:—my curiosity as to the other life is at its height, and, even without that, I should be sufficiently induced to use no more delay, by my invincible disgust at this world, and the doubts, confusion, and disquietude which the secrets of the skies have created in me for some time past, to the most tormenting degree. By no means pity me. It is I who bestow my pity upon all whom I leave vegetating and dragging themselves along mechanically upon the earth.

My son would have found some use in me, but here I must confess a fault. I am not made for children. They weary me; I do not conceal it; and I rely entirely on you for the cares which he will want.

Adieu, for ever.—I am going. My pain will be so short, that I shall hardly perceive it.

LETTER LXXXIII.

From Hermacintha to Adelaide.

WHAT a change a few days have made in our situation, Adelaide! Maria's husband is dead, and you know in what manner! but you do not know the real cause. I send you a letter which he addressed to me for Maria. The latter had just set out when her husband's courier arrived. Conformably with what he said from Adolphus, I opened and read it; that which was joined for myself you are doubtlessly acquainted with. Observe, my dear Adelaide, the extraordinary blindness of a distinguished man, a man of merit, and who might

have been so happy! He does not consider the misfortunes he causes as crimes! The ruin of his victims, the disunion and affliction of families, the falsehood of his principles of seduction, &c. appear to him only as peccadillos!—What a different man he would have been, if his corruption had not commenced so early! I remark two singular things; he seems to have had a presentiment, an obscure idea of true happiness, since he sought in Maria a felicity which he was already become incapable either of deserving, or of feeling; and he was so completely brutified, so obedient to his malignant star, that he was insensible to the misery and vileness of his situation! He destroyed himself laughing!

I have so many things to tell you, that I must begin my story a little higher, and proceed with regularity. Adolphus has informed you of all that concerns us, up to the night of Maria's departure. Now comes what I have to add. I heard

my brother demanding to see me. My women resolutely refused to admit him at that hour. Meantime, they gave me so terrible a picture of his distress and affliction, that I changed my decree. I was afraid that he would disturb Maria's departure, of which he was suspicious, but was unacquainted with the time. I gave my instructions to my women, and desired them to open my apartment, and put lights in my library. Julius came, and I kept him till two hours after Maria was gone.

She went at four o'clock in the morning, in the midst of extreme cold. I had so taken care of the arrangements of her journey that I was at ease. She travels with our pastor, Mademoiselle de Melrode, a nurse, two women, Tolmer, and three steady servants. Her carriage is without wheels, upon a sledge, like the rest. I directed that there should be no bells on the horses, as far as Buren, by which she would pass. Her child is ac-

commodated to a miracle. The carriage is large enough to place the cradle in the midst; beside which, the roads are excellent, the ice is firm, and she has only to glide along as far as Thiel, whence she will go direct to Helmondt.

At six, a woman came to tell me what o'clock it was. This was the signal agreed on. I insisted upon Julius's promising me that he would sleep seven good hours; for his appearance was much changed. I learned, that after I left him, he wandered round Maria's apartment, found the galleries in their usual order, the lamps burning, and waked the watchman, to ask whether Maria was sleeping. "What would Monsieur have my lady do, at such an hour as this?" was the reply.

Julius retired, and remained in his room till nine o'clock. Maria, by that time, was assuredly at Buren. I went down into the garden. You know how I love to brave the cold and ice. Julius,

whom I had caused to be told of my walk, soon joined me. He found me much altered, and very dispirited. I was going to inform him of Maria's departure, when he joyfully made me remark, that a thaw was begun. "To-morrow," said he, "the roads, and especially the rivers, will be impassable. "Be tranquil," said I, "to-morrow she will have finished her journey." He did not hear of her departure without severe affliction. "Do yo think so?" said he; "the journey is very dangerous with a child, and having nobody with her but the pastor. Ah! sister, what have you done?"—Your courier arrived at this moment, and informed us, that a rupture had taken place in the dike of the Upper Rhine; that the canal of Pannerden being filled with ice, all the water was forced into the arm of the Whaal, the dike of which was broken.

"Do you know," said Julius, "that Maria must cross the Linge and the

Whaal! I cannot bear it, let me go to her assistance; beside, I shall presently be sent for to Buren, to the Heemradshuis.*

As we are proprietors both on the Lec and the Linge, Julius is a member of the two colleges. He set off without informing himself, nor had I time to give him information, of the contents of the letter brought by Adolphus's courier. I could not, on my own part, resist the desire of having news of Maria, and reclaiming her. I thought that her unexpected widowhood restored my ancient rights over her.

It was already become impossible to go direct to Buren. The waters of the Whaal overflowed the Betuve; the cannon of alarm gave the signal of an inundation. The more fearful quitted their

* When danger arrives, the counsellors are to be present on the dikes, in the *Heemradshuis*, with the peasants provided with the necessary tools.

houses, and passed over, with their families and cattle, to the left bank of the Lec. Others had already climbed upon the roofs of their houses, preparing to submit to a blockade from the water, and shutting up, in their lofts, along with themselves, their cattle. These were the greater number. I went a long round to reach Thiel, directing my way to Culemburg, where I arrived much fatigued. We were in the midst of the ice, and in great danger. Every thing is in motion, disasters follow one another rapidly, and Maria is I know not where. Julius, in desperation, pursues his way over the moving precipices, and I shall follow his steps as soon as I am permitted—as soon as possible. Adieu.

LETTER LXXXIV.

From the same to the same.

I HAVE conducted you to Culemburg. The dike called the *Diefdyk* serves for a road to go from Culemburg to Gorcum, a town situate on the Whaal. This road runs, so to say, at the base of the delta of the Betuve, which I have thus traversed to its furthest end. The inundation was already high. The waves beat impetuously against the Diefdyk; but the ice was what frightened me most. On one side of the dike the water was rising, and on the other, you looked down a depth of more than thirty feet to the level of the country. Hence all the inhabitants of this district, called the Five Seigniories of the Alblasserwaerd, were momentarily threatened with

the destruction which was suspended over their heads. Almost the whole of them, assembled on this narrow dike, were eagerly employed in strengthening and raising it; but they perceived, with terror, the water gaining on them. I was on foot, and my servants carried my luggage. I could not resist the sensation of a real terror, in considering this new sea as occupying the place of the finest country in the world, especially when I had reached the middle of the length of the dike. It makes an angle at this place, so that I saw myself surrounded almost on all sides by the increasing inundation, which rushed in fury against the banks of that narrow road on which we walked. One might have thought that it was about to burst, at the place where I put my feet. The rocks of ice increased the noise and melancholy aspect of the calamity. I saw several of them, near the village of Acoy, overthrow, in their course, two

windmills and a handsome farm-house, which, a moment before, stood proudly in the middle of the waves. They disappeared in a second.

A sub-inspector of the dikes, a determined man, was proceeding in front of Gorcum, to Dahlen, the outlet of the inundation and the Linge. He was informed, that a fresh rupture having taken place on the Upper Whaal, far from expecting a diminution of the waters, it was necessary to redouble their efforts and activity, and undertake new works. He brought me a letter. Julius thought me still at the Hermitage.

"Maria," said he, "has not been able to cross the river; she has passed through all the villages which I have come to. She has re-ascended the Whaal, from Gorcum to Thiel, but I have not yet been able to find her. Doubtlessly, she has taken refuge in one of the châteaus which lie along this dike.

Write to her, sister; I wait with impatience the return of the bearer, with a formal and positive order (an order from my sister, you understand,) to entrust herself to me, and return to Gorcum, till the crisis shall be passed. Make haste, and write so that she cannot disobey. The inundation is terrible. It was not far from Gorcum, that in one night, all the villages disappeared which form the Biesboch. I cannot avoid entertaining lively fears for all who are situated on the dike of the Whaal. The inundation, increasing continually, is an immense and furious river. We know the violence of the Whaal; and the inhabitants, placed between these two scourges, have no other asylum than the dike, a space of some fathoms in width, which already begins to give way in two places, which trembles at the blows of the waves which strike it on each side, and which affords no shelter to the people. Where will they find

any? The Whaal, on one side, cannot be crossed, nor the inundation on the other. If they attempt to ascend the dike, the cuts form impetuous torrents, which it is even dangerous to approach, and of which the waters increase the volume every minute. On the inner side, that is, toward Gorcum, they have cut a great opening in the dike, to allow the waters of the Linge, and the inundation, a channel into the Whaal. I doubt whether it will be possible to pass it; and yet there remains this only escape. I avail myself of the attempt which the bearer of this letter will make to do so. Be quick with your reply."

I followed the inspector; and, after numberless difficulties and dangers, I rejoined Julius and Maria at Thiel, whence we hastened our return to Gorcum, to go from there to the Hermitage.

What a journey! What a picture! We passed the whole day in the most terrible pangs. We saw rocks of ice float-

ing at a distance, and often carrying upon them the ruins of houses, and even living creatures, whom it was impossible to save. Beyond the river, the surface of the waters extended out of sight; the towns and villages situated on the bank opposite to ours appeared like islands; and on our right, the immense surface of the Betuve wearied the sight with the spectacle of this new sea. It was impossible to fix the eye on any certain point. In following the long dike, I thought myself on a single and narrow path which crossed the ocean.

I should attempt in vain to convey all the sensations I experienced; they were more terrible than those inspired by the most furious storm at sea. Here, there was no hope from the winds and waves, which, changing rapidly the dangers and place of a vessel, give it every moment some new possibility of relief. I surveyed attentively, and was strongly affected by, all that passed around us Brave men were hastily leaving houses

of little solidity, already half carried away. They succeeded with difficulty. The Dutch peasantry think they must perish, if they are to lose all they possess. Their trust in Providence and time confers upon them, in the hour of danger, an inconceivable phlegm. One would say, that they believed in predestination. The spirit of method is so deeply rooted in them, that nothing can force them out of their accustomed track. Though rare, these dangers do sometimes happen. They know that in a few weeks they will pass by, while a long time will be necessary to re-establish a fortune acquired with much pains, economy, labour, and years. The prosperity of a farm often dates back for generations. What sufficiently paints their manners and character, is the reply which was given, in my presence, by a female peasant, to a burgomaster, who was willing to afford her some relief: "Sir," said she, proudly, "I had a competence, and I have lost

every thing; but I am an honest woman, and do not take charity!" Charity, with us, is a stain, because it is a sign of sloth, indolence, and misconduct. Happy the country where sufficient morals remain to make such sentiments general! May no events deprive it of them! and may corruption and vices confine themselves, as hitherto they have done, to the highest and the lowest classes of my countrymen, and spare that middle one in which resides a moderate competence, good morals, and all the happiness which man is permitted to enjoy on earth!

Many peasants, whom we had intreated to leave their houses, became the victims of their obstinacy, after we had passed by. They refused to make the journey, pretending there was less danger in waiting and hoping for the end of the increase of the inundation, than in travelling along the dike between the two seas. In 1744, said they, there was an inundation almost as high as this,

and our fathers staid in their houses. Mean time, enormous rocks of ice were razing and overthrowing every thing in their passage, but nothing could bend these people, who were absolutely infatuated.

Maria had already run many dangers. Not being able to cross the Whaal at Thiel, she went as high as the rupture, which she tried to cross with the help of a dozen well-disposed watermen. They could not succeed, though they had placed their light skiff below the torrent, and made a long circuit in the inundation. The boat was choaked up between the ice, the current, and the trees, and in the greatest danger, all the night. Julius heard of it. He was assured that there was no hope. He ran the risk, reached them, and brought them away safe. He was the occasion of preserving all the inhabitants situate on this long dike, for a space of more than twelve leagues. His example encouraged the labourers

and officers of the dikes; they ventured to brave the eddies of the current, and succeeded in raising, though at a distance from the place of rupture, a sort of temporary dike, which at least reduced to a single opening the waters which fed and increased the inundation.

Already the public confusion declared itself by a fire, which reddened the borders of the horizon, whence it was reflected by the regular movement of the inundation. As we advanced, the river widened, and soon we approached the sea. The waves, tossed by an impetuous wind, dashed with fury over the dike, our only road, often covering the horses and carriages. Our guides, who, for some time had repented of their undertaking, refused to go any further.—What a moment! Dangers on every side; on every side, obstacles almost insurmountable opposed our progress. We stopped, though against our will. At the bottom of the dike, on the inner

side, there was a thatched cottage, built against the rampart. Julius made me go down to it; but there was no means of making those within side open the door. Meanwhile, we heard the cries of several women. At length, they answered us. The old woman arose; the youngest wept on her bed. "O Madam," said she, "this is surely our last day! Do you hear the terrible blasts of wind, resembling thunder? Just so, they say, it blowed, when, close to this place, the water drowned several hundred villages, many millions of *morgen* of excellent soil, and all the inhabitants. It was just so at the terrible formation of the Biesboch. It is all over. Do you hear the waves fall more frequently every moment, over the dike?"—"Be at ease, my good woman, our sledges can still run along the road."—"O Madam, what rashness!" said the old woman, "and have you not already been overturned by the double violence of the winds and

waves? You must know, that at ordinary times, when the tide is at its height, as it is now, the dike is hardly passable."

We all went out of the frail cabin, to satisfy ourselves that the sledges, Julius, the pastor, and the domestics, were still safe. What a picture! Scarcely had we put our heads out of the door, when we were struck by the spray of the furious waves which covered the dike and the carriages, and shook them in spite of the efforts of six strong men, aided by enormous cables. I could not imagine to myself that the men were capable of resisting the force of the wind and the violence of the waves, which covered them every time, so as to suspend their respiration, as Julius afterward told me, and raised them off their feet, forcibly shaking the cordage and strong pile to which they had fastened themselves, though the latter was deeply driven into the ground, at a considerable distance below the dike, and sheltered from the

waves and wind. Julius assured me that he could not come into the cottage if he would. Though the distance between him and me was only the height of the dike, I could scarcely hear him speak.

In this manner we passed two hours in the most horrible anxiety. At length, in spite of the efforts of our people, they were thrown down with violence from the top of the dike, and the sledges upon them. Excepting a few contusions, they had the good fortune to escape unhurt; and Maria, crying, said, "I am glad of it; for, now, we are all, at least, together;" and she looked at her son sleeping peacefully in her arms, unconscious of all fear and trouble. Thrice happy innocence! still happier ignorance! of what assistance, of what utility are you not, in the greatest dangers!

We were not at the end of our difficulties. Collected together in the cottage,

the blows of the waves became so violent that all the dike trembled, and we thought ourselves hurried away with it. Recovered from our alarm, Julius spoke, and asked the women where their husbands were. "They are sent to the college of the Lec, which is also in danger," said they; "and they are at work on that side." Julius proposed to us to follow the road on foot, along the inner side of the dike. "This storm is too violent," said he; "at the end, the thaw will produce severer effects toward the mouths of our rivers, which, almost all running from south to north, thaw at their heads, while their mouths are frozen long after, where the great number of little canals which they form render their melting more difficult and slower. This horrible hurricane," said he, "will separate the ice at the mouths, and will save us."

We performed, in this manner, a long and painful march till daylight. Julius

walked first, carrying, with the assistance of Tolmer, Maria's son, completely covered over in his little cradle. Each of us was supported by two men, and thus we walked for several long hours in succession, and reached Papendrecht, a village opposite Dordrecht. After a short repose, we took to the right, thus crossing the isle of Alblasserwaerd at its base, and saw ourselves once more on the Lec, which, even here, more distant from the sea, was still frozen. The thaw showed itself only by a few fissures.

Nothing could exceed my suffering, Adelaide, to see, in every village, the women and children assembled round the pastor, calling upon Heaven for their own preservation, and for that of their country, and asking us with tears, "*Is de dyk door?*"* On the Lec, we were not long before we were in new perils. The thaw increased rapidly. We were

* "Is the dike burst?"

assured that it would be impossible to cross the Lec from Utrecht to Vianen. We ascended the left bank of the river, and had the inundation on our right. The Lec swelled with noise, and the ice threatened its bank, which formed a narrow dike, and was our only road. Suddenly, near an insulated house, we saw the flakes of ice stopped, and accumulating upon each other with such rapidity, that without powerful succour, the house must have been razed to its foundations, and our progress arrested by this new obstacle. On these occasions, the mountains of ice rise to a prodigious height, become impassable, and multiplying, at the same time, behind you, and sometimes along a considerable extent of the dike, they bury you, or shut you up in a narrow prison from which nothing can withdraw you. The master of the house cast a look of assurance upon his weeping wife and children, and providing himself with an enormous

club, intended for this use, planted himself boldly upon the first mass of ice, and, in spite of its thickness, succeeded in breaking it, and forcing it to go down with the stream. All our men eagerly followed this heroic example; the house was saved, and we pursued our route.

It is impossible, Adelaide, without having been witness to the irresistible rapidity of these flakes of ice, notwithstanding the slow and tranquil appearance of their motion, and without knowing how imminent is the danger, and how difficult to avoid, in opposing with human strength the formation of these frightful *ysdammen* (or dikes of ice,) to conceive the courage of the peasant whom we assisted.

Arrived at Vianen, we wished to cross the river, which was filled with floating ice. We had great difficulty in doing so, and doubtlessly encountered at this point our greatest dangers. Packed in a *schuyt-schowen*, as light, though less

long and more wide than an Indian *periaga*, we several times found ourselves carried along by the enormous masses of ice, upon which the watermen climbed to drag our boat by their arms, and thus force it to proceed amid these floating islands, then launching it again in the spaces between them, and returning lightly into the frail vessel, but not without making it rock from side to side. It was after a score of adventures of this kind, that we gained the right bank, where we were received with open arms. We reached our home without delay, that old château which we shall soon quit to inhabit the new one, which is almost entirely restored and furnished.

I say no more of our dangers in crossing the Lec. You frequently experience similar scenes in North Holland, and especially in Zealand and Friseland, in which you have lived.

I ought not to forget to inform you, that M. de Bylandt, in whose house Maria

took refuge when Julius saved her from the inundation, had received, as a relation of the Duke D'Ast, the news of his unhappy end; so that Maria knew every thing when she rejoined me.

LETTER LXXXV.

From Adolphus to Julius.

CONGRATULATE me, congratulate me, dear Julius, that you are not deprived of a friend, and that I preserve my Adelaide!

What will surprize you is, that she owes her safety, not to our most celebrated physicians, who were consulted, but to me only. Providence owed this miracle to the most amiable and most beloved of women.

My father and mother, my children,

the physicians, and myself, surrounded Adelaide's bed, in the deepest consternation at her state. Adelaide suffered much, but did not complain. She held my hand constantly pressed to her heart. Sometimes I felt it beat violently, and sometimes scarcely move; and at length the professional men pronounced the fatal sentence.—I know not how I had strength to bear it. The physicians left me. I looked at my Adelaide. Her dying eyes were not yet without expression, and her voice was still intelligible, though weak. I turned toward my parents: "They say there is no hope," cried I; "I may therefore risk a last attempt. Let us chuse some one of those violent remedies which the physicians mentioned during her sickness, which they were right, perhaps, in avoiding as dangerous, but which cannot be so now, because all chance of recovery is said to be past." We made choice of two of these heroic remedies; one of them a

composition of sulphur, called *Beguin sulphur;* the other a natural substance, called *pyrites.* I hastened to Pinel, to ask which of the two offered the most chances, and the fewest risks. He would allow of no trial, assuring me that all was useless. I insisted, and he pronounced for the first of the two drugs. We resorted to it without delay; and, an hour after, it produced a perspiration, and a violent crisis, at the end of which Adelaide was out of danger.—She is now in complete convalescence.

O my friend! why were you not a witness of the melting scenes which passed around my Adelaide's bed? Before taking the terrible part which was to decide upon her existence, and upon mine; upon the fate of our children, and, in a word, on that of our two families, we all assembled in our chapel, and there vowed to dedicate to the poor, and principally to the mothers of families, the half of our fortunes.

Oh! that you had seen the seriousness and devotion of my two little children, and with what fervour they prayed for their mother! How they remained constantly afterward at the foot of the bed, and, forgetful of their sports and toys, appeared no longer to be children!—Scarcely had I given the potion to Adelaide, when my little Georgina, who looked at me, while I did it, with fixed attention, suddenly ceased to keep her large eyes motionless, and said, in an angelic voice, "Papa, mama is cured." Her prediction is accomplished, my friend; Adelaide is restored to her happy family.

Our vow is already performed. My parents, those of Adelaide, and myself, are less rich than we were, by half; and yet it seems to me, as if, from that moment, I had fallen into inheritance of all the riches of the earth.

Adieu, dear Julius. My Adelaide calls me, and I return to her. With

what pleasure we shall bring you, in ourselves, a faithful friend, a sister for Maria, and companions for your children.

LETTER LXXXVI.

From the same to the same.

ADELAIDE will speedily be re-established. I shall never be able to express all my happiness. I thought myself at the height of joy at the commencement of our marriage; and when I saw Adelaide again, after our first separation, I was still more ravished. When I received my first-born, when I presented him to his mother, and when, afterward, I saw that the best of wives was also the best of mothers; when, every day, I saw that I became better by her example; when, after the birth of my second child, I saw myself surrounded only by affection and the most sweet sensations; when

Adelaide taught me that a good wife and a happy family are an inexhaustible treasure of real pleasures; when I saw to what a degree she was proud of my happiness, and how hers depended upon mine; I thought then that there were no blissful sensations which were unknown to me. But those which I experience now surpass all others, and seem to unite all their charms.

Adelaide has learned all the particulars of her illness. "Adolphus," said she, "you make me wish to be ill."—All that calls to mind her danger, even the minutest things, seem to have become precious to her. As for me, I know not whether the fear of losing her is the cause, but never did she appear more lovely than now. Her looks, her voice, her countenance, and gesture, have acquired new graces and new charms. Our parents and our children have redoubled their affection for her. Your happiness, which cannot now be

long retarded (I foretel it with knowledge of what I say) which on the other side, is necessary to that of Julius and Maria. Adelaide has increased my self-love.

Yesterday, we learned the accident which has happened to our young cousin D'Eu. You remember how pretty she was. The small-pox has disfigured her. "If such an accident had happened to me"— said Adelaïde ;—"And what then?"—"You would have loved me as well as now," said she, pressing me in her arms ; "I am sure you would."

LETTER LXXXVII.

From Julius to the Prelate of Arnheim.

THE innocent caresses of Maria's infant, dear Prelate, seem forerunners of my felicity. Adolphus's happy family has joined ours ; but all my wishes are

not yet complete, because Hermacintha has not consented that I should adopt the son of the Duke. By what laws, by acts, can we acquire that which only God and blood can give us? "Yes, he shall be your child," she says; "but without forgetting his father. I well know that we can love a cousin, a ward, as a child. Is it not possible?" said she to Maria, who, as her only answer, threw herself on her neck. I admire how the affection of these cherished beings has always remained the same as it was when the difference of age was more considerable, when the one was a woman, and the other a child.

This was the day appointed for returning to the Hermitage. At day-break we rose, and assembled at the door which opens into the garden. Hermacintha led us. We found all the chambers and all the furniture again, such as we had left them. With what joy did I not once more set my eyes upon the trifles which, a

few days before my departure, I received from her! I had the pleasure of recovering my time-keeper and Maria's cuirass. "It was not thick enough," said she, examining the places where the balls had pierced it.—"Yes, cousin, it was thick enough at the essential part. See, it is still whole on the left side!"—In the little cabinet which leads into the library, we found the remains of the two bouquets which you must remember, dried, and carefully placed in the herbary, through that worthy Tolmer. Scarcely could they be known, but yet they testified the antiquity of my sentiments. "What fine presents you make me!" said Maria, when I presented them. But, notwithstanding the disdain she affected, she could not conceal her joy at the sight of those pledges of our early affection, and carefully preserved them.

My sister was of opinion with us, that the château was entirely re-established, and orders were given for our

removal. Every thing had been prepared, and we are already installed.

Near the château, on the brow of the hill, is a music-room; and it was here that formerly Hermacintha most frequently sat. This little chamber, though separated from the house, is a dependence. There is a path to it, from Hermacintha's apartment, floored with wood, and running across a delicious parterre, covered with a profusion of verdure, and especially of flowers. A dozen venerable trees seem to protect this little space with their thick and spreading branches.

From this spot, one admires the Lec and the Betuve, and here we are kept awake, without being stunned, by the noise of the happy birds which inhabit it, and by that of a cool and limpid stream, which conceals and displays itself alternately along the parterre, as it runs to fall into the Lec.

This enchanting place, the favourite retreat of Hermacintha, is also my cou-

sin's and mine. It was the cradling of our happy childhood.

We beheld it again in its ancient state. Tolmer, so to say, has made it spring up from its ashes. By a fortunate chance, the greater part of its beautiful trees had been spared.

Good Tolmer had forgotten but one thing; and that was, to restore the name which this retreat formerly bore, *Geluc's Rust*, the Repose of Happiness. "What name must we give this place?" said Hermacintha.—"It was formerly called *Geluc's Rust*," said I to Maria, who, melted by the mingled recollections of our childhood and our misfortunes, took the pencil out of the hands of Tolmer, and wrote *Kleine Rust tot aan de Grote*, the Little Repose till the Great One.

We continued our promenade; and, thanks to the cares of our worthy prelate, and thanks to the good directions of Hermacintha, we found the park, the

gardens, and the whole estate, in the most prosperous condition, except that some of the farms were saddened by the cruel hand of death, while others, however, were rendered cheerful by new births. Hermacintha's orphans are now at a marriageable age. What a beautiful assemblage they form! Surely they will be twelve friends! Hermacintha has provided husbands for them. Each knows the youth intended for her; each loves and is beloved; but the happy pairs meet only once a month, on a certain day, which Hermacintha fixes, but with respect to which, a mysterious silence is preserved. They are to be married at one time, under the protection of Maria.

It would be useless to give you a description of a place so well known to you. It will be sufficient to tell you, that every thing is in order, and all the traces of war, the troubles, and of time, effaced.

We enter upon this happy Hermitage with the spring. Released from her icy fetters, nature awakes; these beautiful scenes become themselves again; but our hearts are not restored to their early feelings; upon us, the traces which have been left are ineffacable. In vain do I find myself in the same place, with the same objects of my affections; I cannot recover the purity of my primitive emotions; and, already, like an old man, I accuse nature and the seasons of the change. Ah! dear Prelate, I greatly fear that it is myself who have changed! that age, burying so many delightful illusions under the weight of reflections and chagrins, against which no mortal can entirely guarantee himself, we wrongly accuse the seasons and nature of a change inseparable from the weakness of our material and corruptible organs:

> Une vase impure aigrit la plus douce liqueur.
>
> DELILLE.

> Vessels impure the sweetest liquor sour.

We breakfasted this morning almost as early, and in the same place, as several years ago; that is, in Hermacintha's pavilion. My sister, calling to mind the address which she had formerly made to us, suddenly resumed the subject:—

"Well, my friends, did I exaggerate the sorrows of love? Are you fixed in your opinion that I am wrong in confining myself to friendship? You are now able to convince yourselves of the justice of my observations. You have passed through the best years of your lives; you have run your race with a great number of acquaintances, and with some friends; you have seen all the effects of love. Tell me whether I deceived you? whether I am deceived myself? In this place, we talked of love and its effects, and you have seen them all. Amelia, the Duke, and many others whom you have known sufficiently for this purpose, give you an idea of the odiousness of those pleasures so much

boasted, and so much pursued. As to true love, your own and my example, those of Sophia, Adelaide, and Adolphus, sufficiently prove, that even when circumstances unite in favour of lovers who are virtuous and worthy of the name, to offer them the meed of happiness; even when virtue and the most substantial causes give them arms with which to surmount all obstacles, still there are evils which cannot be avoided, such as the insensibility of one of the parties, the bonds and embarrassments of society, and, after all, death, the certain end of all things. Suppose, my friends, that you were free—" Maria blushed deeply at these words—and, for myself, I was agreeably awakened from my sad and deep meditations. The pain, which lies at the bottom of my heart, ceased for a moment the gnawing of its tooth, and I felt a lively palpitation. Then, said I. "Then," said Hermacintha, "even in that case, you would

not obtain those pure enjoyments, that entire happiness which you promised yourselves. The recollection of your early engagements, and of your succeeding misfortunes, would recall to your minds the nothingness of things. You would be happy pensively, and not without shedding the tears of regret and unaffected pain."

"Your vows," said I, to Maria.

"My vows are promises which I should do wrong to break."

"Do you not see," said Hermacintha, "these black garments?——But here are our children coming."

We heard the voices of Georgina and Maria's boy, who were running toward us. I advanced to meet them, and, taking in my arms the son of the Duke, "Come, my child," said I, embracing him, "you are my real son; twice have I given you life." Then, I placed him in the arms of his happy mother, who thanked me by one of

those looks which she formerly granted me, but which have been long unknown to me; a charming look, in which, in a moment, the thoughts are communicated, in which all is said which another wishes to know, and all which we desire to express, without other effort, and without the use of words.

We breakfasted together with the two lovely children. The villagers surprised us, by bringing presents of all the productions of the dairy, and the early fruits; the young rose-bearers, linked in each other's arms, sung rural songs as they walked in procession toward their island, and the day was far advanced when we returned into the château.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

From Maria to the same.

It is to you, my Father, that I owe and that I will give a recital of the happiest day of my life.

That, then, which you so often repeated to us, my Father, in our misfortunes, is incontestably true; life has two roads, the road of truth, and the road of error. In the first, we meet with real pleasures, amid dangers against which Heaven provides us with the means of defence; and the sole blessings of life are there. In the other, we find only illusions, vapour, and noise, and nothing else can present itself, because nothing is able to exist on the road of error, but deceitful images, like those which real objects cast on the surface of the water. We see things where they are not.

I have passed through the greater and the best part of my life in the midst of numberless misfortunes, and I have surmounted all those which it is in human power to surmount, thanks to Hermacintha! It is she, who, in the midst of the most terrible storm, preserved me by the loss of my liberty; it is she who

saved me from myself, by attaching me to my duties; it is she who preserved me from snares in a painful situation between my husband and a friend loving and too well beloved; it is she who has conferred on me the last benefaction; it is she, in a word, to whom I owe the happiest day of my life.

For several days past, preparations had been making for the great village-festival; that is to say, the marriages of the orphans. Their graces, beauty, youth, and health, formed a brilliant constellation. Never was the Hermitage more worthy of that name; they peopled our fields and hills; every thing was animated by their gaiety, and the prospect of their approaching happiness. It is some days since a new existence has opened upon me. Adelaide and her happy family are with us. Adolphus and Julius are happy in their re-union, and I have acquired a real friend in Ade-

laide, the model of wives and mothers. Our Hermitage is now the most complete and the most happy of colonies.

Julius alone concealed with pain in our presence the lively regrets of his heart, and a dissatisfaction which he was unable to contain. It was not without disquietude that I permitted Hermacintha to obtain from me a painful reserve, a sort of falsehood, which I hope to call the first and the last of my life. I should reproach myself with it for ever, if it had not been indispensable for assuring the happiness of both.

"What a pity!" said Hermacintha, at length, to us, last Sunday, when she was alone with Julius and me, "what a pity that your vows, my child, impede your common happiness!"—"What!" returned Julius, with the warmest emotion, "are not our sorrows at an end? O sister! O Maria! must we again plunge into the interminable career of

troubles and the contradictions of life? I cannot bear it."

He was beside himself. Never did his noble and gentle countenance appear more interesting.—"Answer yourself, my friend, the question which I am going to put to you," replied Hermacintha. "Having made solemn vows to escape a great danger, can we break them when Heaven has listened to our prayers? By making them when the peril is past, should we not render ourselves unworthy of the goodness of Providence, and expose ourselves to the most just retribution?"

Julius made the most painful efforts to overcome the irresistible arguments of Hermacintha; but it was visible that he pleaded against his conscience. I gave judgment for my sister.

"I expected so," said he; "he that hears one, hears the other. I must never be the author of your happiness, then,

Maria! I must never pretend to that end of the thoughts and dreams of all my life, and this, though I had thought myself so near so sweet a moment!"— The malicious Hermacintha satisfied herself by every means that he was entirely convinced of the necessity of resignation; and, when she saw him perfectly decided to prefer Maria's duties to his happiness, she threw herself on my neck: "My part is finished," said she; "it is for you, Maria, to complete the rest."— We embraced Julius, who trembled with joy, happiness, and surprize. We informed him that my views, according to you, were only promises; and that beside you had solemnly relieved me from them, and I was free.*—Oh! w[illegible]lay for your friends.

* There is something at once so contemptible and so mischievous, in the doctrines involved in this sentence, that it would be a public insult to let it go to a Protestant press without comment. That idle

As soon as Julius knew that we were to be united, I saw an extraordinary change in his whole person. He seemed to become again what he was before our departure for Lisle. He insisted on my fixing the day, and threw himself on his knees:—"Dear Maria," said he, "make me sure of the glorious destiny of being yours for ever." I was too much agitated to make him any reply. I fell into his arms, and in lifting my head again, I felt my hands bathed with his scalding tears. Dear Prelate, even if I had not been tried, I should be sure of never changing from him, for never shall I for-

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Vows are wrongly made, and still more wrongly kept, is the true doctrine by which those who make them are absolved from them; but to pretend, at the same moment, that they are really binding between God and man, and yet that they can be dispensed with through the authority of the priest, is one of the most audacious impositions ever attempted upon mankind.—Tr.

get the sensation which these tears of true friendship, and an affection the softest and most legitimate, have impressed upon my hands and upon my heart. "Yes," replied I.—"Yes," repeated he, with a cry of joy.

My sister proposed to us to go into our littlegarden, to think of our arrangements. We went there, and what was my surprize and Julius's!—a little fête was prepared; the rose-bearers came to compliment me, and to present us with flowers and presents. It was, without my recollecting it, my birth-day. "As for me, my child," said Hermacintha, "I intend you a present entirely different from that of any preceding year, but I hope it will not displease you. Julius, go before us to the door where you see the other rose-bearers; they will tell you from me what you are to do."

We came there, and behold a new surprize! Here was a chapel completely

lighted up, and we heard invisible music. The greatest magnificence, united with the most elegant simplicity, met my eyes; the incense ascended toward Heaven, and every voice called upon Maria and Julius to give the signal for the happy marriages.—During the ceremony, you should have seen my husband, with the most serious expression, and the greatest fervour, shedding tears of joy and tenderness, and promising to be my future happiness. What silence through all the assembly! What a ravishing effect was produced on us by this magnificent aspect!—On leaving the church, we found all the village collected without invitation, putting up their prayers for us, and testifying the most endearing cheerfulness.

Several days have passed since that moment, and I find an opportunity, with difficulty, for the first time, to give you the recital. Only one thing was wanting

to my happiness, it was that your illness forbade that you should give us the nuptial benediction; but we shall come and ask it of you. It is the earliest thing which we shall do, when I am recovered from my first impressions of so much happiness. At present, my mind is in so extraordinary a state, that all which passes seems a dream.

I assisted formerly at another marriage, and I am astonished to find no resemblance between these two epochs of my life—epochs nevertheless the same!

Adieu, my father, my benefactor; adieu, friend, worthy friend of Hermacintha! What can I say more? It is now that she may be proud of her work.

This morning we have been with our wards and their husbands, to visit the new village. Hermacintha seemed a divinity in the midst of us; she saw only fields fertilized by her care, houses which she has built, marriages which

she has formed, families which she has sustained or comforted; and, worthy creature of the Most High, she could say, "That which is good is my work!"

FINIS.

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